



# Friends of the Regina Public Library

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[www.friendsofrpl.ca](http://www.friendsofrpl.ca)

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February 20, 2014

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

Dear Mayor and Council,

**Re: Regina Public Library 2014 Budget at Regina City Council, February 24, 2014**

This letter expresses the response of the Friends of the Regina Public Library (FRPL) to the proposed 2014 budget for the Regina Public Library (RPL). We appreciate the opportunity to make this presentation to City Council.

FRPL supports the request for a 2.0% increase in the mill rate to support the Regina Public Library 2014 budget.

As the budget document indicates, good work is being done by the library in: literacy, programming, the writer in residence program, Dunlop Art Gallery exhibits and programs, the Film Theatre, Outreach services, summer reading programs, teen programs, Aboriginal programs, and programs for seniors. Many people were pleased to see the purchase of the digital projection equipment for the Film Theatre, showing the Library's commitment to the Film Theatre into the future.

It is important to draw attention to the financial commitment that the RPL will be putting towards the North Central Shared Facility project, which will house the Albert Branch among its services. The RPL share of the Shared Facility project is \$2.5 million. There is \$619,000 allocated in the budget this year and \$1.88 million will be needed for contribution over the next 3 years.

The lease to the George Bothwell Branch is being reviewed – the current lease costs are \$200,000 per year. Regent Place Branch lease costs are \$206,700 per year. These leases are major ongoing financial commitments for the library.

With regard to the funds spent on collections, the inroads into electronic resources are appreciated by many patrons. On the other hand people still want books. We get feedback that library patrons are concerned about the reduction in the number of books in the collection, seeing half empty shelves. Patrons wonder how the decision is made

to get rid of and sell books. They wonder whether this major culling of books is a huge loss of the money that was invested in the books when they were purchased. Patrons are also concerned about the types of books and other materials that are being eliminated. Perhaps a system of notifying patrons that certain collections were being culled and materials in those topics would be listed which allow a "second chance" consideration of what is eliminated from the collection and offer the opportunity for interested individuals or groups to purchase the books and keep them together.

In meeting community needs, the library talks about evidence based decision-making, so important to accountability for funding well spent. Last year the library implemented a new classification system for books at two of its branches (replacing the Dewey decimal system). What processes were used and what are the results of evaluating the success of the new approach?

It is good to see the RPL made the effort to have an on-line survey this summer about library services and Central Library. One suggestion is that the on-line survey was rather complicated and could have been complemented with in-person surveys in the Branches reaching those people who do not access computers. It is good to know that funds will be spent on a public consultation process sometime this year, since previous public consultations on Central Library were conducted over 5 years ago.

It is good to see in the budget document that the RPL's Service Plan, originally approved in September 2008 to cover the years from 2009 to 2011 will be reviewed and updated.

The budget contains funds for RPL to hire a Development Manager to coordinate fund-raising. One of the options would be to create a Foundation for fund-raising, like other libraries have in other locations. Is creating a fund-raising Foundation something that the Library Board has considered? While fundraising can be undertaken to support some capital expenses, FRPL wants to continue to emphasize the importance of having a strong publicly-funded budget for maintaining the Library's buildings, high-quality services and staff.

It was not noted in the budget document, but the CUPE Local 1594 staff contract expired December 31, 2013, so we need to ensure adequate funding for paying our excellent RPL staff their well-deserved rewards and for ensuring good working conditions and a positive atmosphere.

Last year in our submission to City Council regarding the RPL budget we stated that as our province expands and benefits from newcomers from around the world there is an increased demand for library resources in many languages and to some extent for programs such as literacy training. In addition we commented on the importance of the services related to Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal community members and the importance of Outreach services and other services supporting the use of the library's materials by people with disabilities. This year the Saskatchewan Library Trustees Association presented a brief to the Minister of Education and highlighted the first two of

these issues. FRPL wrote a supporting letter to the Minister of Education supporting the SLTA request for increased funding for Saskatchewan libraries and additional resources for Aboriginal literacy and English as an Additional Language services, as well as for services related to persons with disabilities.

Last year City Council increased its borrowing capacity, partly for the stadium and city infrastructure, but a portion of the debt load would potentially be for the upgrade of Central Library. Feedback to FRPL has been that people would like a design that renovates and adds to the current building, which would be less costly than a complete demolition and rebuild and would preserve the heritage of the modernist Central Library building. Members of the public continue to state that in upgrading Central Library expenses should be kept to a reasonable level not requiring involvement in public-private-partnership. People want a publicly-owned facility that is directly focused on library services rather than a more expensive facility with a complexity of private and public services. Full public consultation on the plans for Central Library will hopefully include a full discussion of these financial issues.

Last year we raised the issue of the new demands that will be created for library services as Regina's population grows and neighbourhoods develop and change. What initiatives has the RPL Board developed to address these changes? In its planning and its work with developers, how has City Council recognized the impact of new developments on demand for library services?

Ten years ago at this time a petition was circulating by Friends of the Regina Public Library asking that City Council provide the RPL sufficient funds, in addition to the library mill rate, to prevent the closure of any of the library branches, the Dunlop Art Gallery or the Prairie History Room. As a result of the support brought forward by FRPL and resulting decisions by City Council and the Regina Public Library Board none of the threatened branches (Connaught, Glen Elm or Prince of Wales) or the Dunlop Art Gallery or the Prairie History Room were closed – they continue to thrive. It is important for us to remember the need to maintain openness and accountability about library services and recognize the support of the citizens of Regina for their libraries that continues to this day.

Thank you for the opportunity to present these comments for public discussion.

Sincerely,

Joanne Havelock  
Chair  
Friends of the Regina Public Library

## FRIENDS OF THE REGINA PUBLIC LIBRARY – WHO WE ARE

Friends of the Regina Public Library (FRPL) formed in December 2003 in response to the threatened closure of several Regina Public Library Branches: Connaught Library, Glen Elm Library, Prince of Wales Library, the Prairie History Room located at the Central Library and the Dunlop Art Gallery with galleries located at Sherwood Library and at Central Library.

FRPL organized and worked with people from all walks of life, and from communities throughout the City to help citizens show their support for their libraries. A petition with over 26,000 signatures helped convince the Regina Public Library Board to rescind its plans for closures. It helped convince the Regina City Council that the citizens of Regina value their libraries and would support much needed, but modest, increases in the mill rate to provide the Library with additional funding.

FRPL continues to play an important role in:

- monitoring the RPL Board activities and working with the Board to reach mutual goals,
- supporting efforts by RPL and other organizations to improve libraries,
- involving the public in having their say on libraries; and
- celebrating the Libraries and our community.

**Vision:** A strong library system meeting community and patron's needs that is accessible to all

**Mission:** In an equitable and public manner, through ongoing dialogue between the public and decision-makers, support the maintenance and development of a strong set of diverse and accessible library products, services and programs that meet the needs of all Regina residents.

### Goals:

1. To promote transparent, accountable, democratic decision-making within and about the Regina Public Library.
2. To promote equitable access to library services to meet the needs of diverse communities.
3. To promote the maintenance and enhancement of RPL programs and services including those that support literacy and provide cultural opportunities for all.
4. To actively promote the value of library services throughout the community.
5. To create a vibrant FRPL organization.

### Why We Are Here

The library plays a prominent role in our communities and in our lives. Most of us have fond memories of visiting the library in our youth, either with family, friends or on our own. The library is one of the central places that children can go to learn a love of books and learning. Libraries help to build strong individuals, strong families and strong

communities. In Regina, the first thing the citizens of Regina did was to present a petition to the Regina City Council asking that a free public library be established. The bylaw was passed January 17, 1908.

Over the past hundred years the Regina Public Library has benefited from the generous support of citizens, of politicians and business people who recognize that building a strong library system was the cornerstone of a progressive community. The staff and board of the Regina Public Library built a library system that is recognized across Canada for its innovative programming.

In 1974 the Library Board approved a Policy Statement, which stated that the Library's objective was, "to provide education, information, research, aesthetic appreciation and recreation for the entire community". This attitude towards supporting learning and enrichment through many disciplines led the Library to include a film theatre, art gallery, and history room in its programming as well as extensive book, magazine and video collections. At one point the Globe Theater even found its home in the Regina Public Library!

Unfortunately the later years of the Regina Public Library saw a gradual decrease in political support for the library. The last decade was one of uncertainty as several consecutive Library Boards chose not to ask for increases in the mill rate that would have allowed the Regina Public Library to keep up with inflation and ensure adequate resources for building maintenance and repairs. This situation led to the announcement on November 26, 2003 that the Library Board would have to close the Prince of Wales Branch, Connaught Branch and Glen Elm Branch as well as the Dunlop Art Gallery and the Prairie History Room.

The community reacted immediately by forming the Friends of the Regina Public Library to oppose the closures, resulting in a petition of 26,000 signatures being presented to City Council on March 5, 2004. As a result, the closures were rescinded and the Library Board, under the direction of City Council, launched a task force to examine the options. FRPL also launched its own Task Force. The Friends of the Dunlop (FODAG) also formed and worked together with FRPL to hold events, create public dialogue, draw attention to the issues and suggest alternatives to closures. After further protests, extensive media coverage and changes to the Library Board, the decision to close the Branches, the Prairie History Room and the Dunlop Art Gallery was rescinded.

The Friends of RPL, FODAG and other community groups and individuals were successful in stopping the closures in 2004, and changes have certainly occurred in the Library Board and Management since that date. Under the new Board and management, new programs have been introduced and there has been construction of new Prince of Wales and Regent Place Branches. Still, FRPL continues to believe that it is important for there to be a public voice in the City about Libraries. A voice that is able to provide constructive suggestions where needed, and to recognize and support the Library's achievements.