



Friends of the Regina Public Library

2042 Garnet Street, Regina, SK. S4T 2Z6

www.friendsofrpl.ca

December 4, 2014

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

Dear Mayor and Council,

Re: Regina Public Library 2015 Budget at Regina City Council, December 8, 2014

We appreciate the opportunity to present the views of the Friends of the Regina Public Library (FRPL) to the proposed 2015 Regina Public Library (RPL) Budget.

The budget document highlights the RPL's achievements in the past year, and the work of the RPL Board and staff is appreciated. Time doesn't permit discussing all of them in this presentation. Some of the highlights are:

- RPL sponsorship of John Pateman's presentation "Developing a Community-Led Public Library" at the Saskatchewan Library Association Conference, highlighting ways to engage library staff and the community in setting library directions, to include working class people and the socially excluded and those who do not traditionally use libraries.
- Consultations on the upgrade to Central Library
- Continued work on the North Central Shared Facility Plans
- Geek Summit and Makerspace Conference
- Installation of the Digital Cinema Projection System at the Film Theatre
- Literacy programs
- Literacy Café at Central and Glen Elm and Family Language Kits
- Continuation of the Writer in Residence program
- Innovative exhibits and programs by Dunlop Art Gallery
- Summer Reading and other literacy initiatives
- Programming for children, teens and families,
- Aboriginal programming
- Financial literacy programs

Last year's RPL budget stated that they would be updating the Service Plan, approved in September 2008 to cover 2009 to 2011. It will be good to see this update proceed.

We receive feedback that people appreciate electronic resources but still want printed books and we note while \$170,000 will be spent on E-books, \$1 million dollars will be spent on print books.

With regard to the culling of books and collections, we believe that patrons should be notified prior to culling, allowing for a “second chance” consideration and this would offer interested individuals or groups the opportunity to purchase the books and/or keep the collections together.

There is concern about the significant funds for self-service check-out machines with targets that would mean only 10% of check-outs would be face to face. Bins for returning books and the use of electronic databases further reduce interactions with staff. Unless a patron searches out a staff member, they do not have the opportunity to interact and discuss what they are reading, or hear about new books, movies, music or programs.

Two years ago we noted the need for library resources in many languages as our province gains from newcomers from around the world, and the continued importance of services related to Aboriginal culture and community members. FRPL appreciates that the Saskatchewan Library Trustees Association continues to highlight the need to support these services through all Saskatchewan libraries and to present these issues to the provincial government.

FRPL also recognizes the value of equipment and services supporting the use of the library’s materials by people with disabilities.

The RPL recently hired a Development Manager to coordinate fund-raising, and we continue to encourage the creation of a fundraising Foundation.

While fundraising can support some capital expenses, FRPL continues to emphasize the importance of a strong publicly-funded budget for maintaining the Library’s buildings, high-quality services and staff.

Thus FRPL supports the request for a 2.7% increase in the mill rate to support the RPL’s 2015 budget.

Negotiations are continuing on the CUPE Local 1594 staff contract that expired December 31, 2013. Library workers are the heart of the libraries and we need to ensure adequate funding for RPL staff and for ensuring good working conditions and a positive atmosphere.

Improvements to the Glen Elm and Sherwood branches, the Dunlop Art Gallery and Children’s Branch will help serve patrons better. Plans are proceeding on the North Central Shared Facility project, which will house the Albert Branch among its services.

FRPL was pleased to see the RPL initiate a new consultation process about Central Library and encouraged citizens to take part. We look forward to the consultants' report. It will be valuable for the Board to lay out the next steps in the process, so the public can anticipate and be engaged in this important decision.

The RPL has stated it is holding back on expenditures on the Central Library building. This raises concerns that it could be like Connaught School, where neglect led to what was avoidable problems causing the demolition of the building.

The phrase "A new Central Library will become a distinguishing city landmark" seems to indicate a predetermination of a new building, involving demolition of the current building. Feedback to FRPL has been that people would like a design that renovates and adds to the current building. This would be less costly and would preserve the heritage of the modernist Central Library building.

Last year City Council increased its borrowing capacity, partly for the upgrade of Central Library. Members of the public continue to state that the cost of upgrading Central Library should be kept to a reasonable level not requiring involvement in public-private-partnership. People want a publicly-owned facility directly focused on library services rather than a more expensive facility with a complexity of private and public services.

Previously we noted the new demands being created for library services as Regina's population grows and neighbourhoods develop and change. What progress has been made by the Library Board in developing initiatives to address these changes? How has City Council recognized the impact of new developments on demand for library services?

'21st century libraries' is a phrase that is being used frequently – hopefully not just adopting trends but improving services in a viable way. The time and resources spent to involve the community in decision-making and to include the broad range of people in the Library are resources well-spent. It is important to maintain openness and accountability about library services and recognize and celebrate the continuing support of the citizens of Regina for their libraries.

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.