

# Friends of the Regina Public Library

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2042 Garnet St., Regina, SK S4T 2Z6

March 22, 2021

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

Dear Mayor and Council:

Re: Regina Public Library 2021 Budget at Regina City Council Budget Meeting, March 24, 2021

The following are comments from the Friends of the Regina Public Library (FRPL) for presentation to City Council on the proposed 2021 Regina Public Library (RPL) Budget, that asks for City Council's approval of a 2.9% increase in the Library mill rate. FRPL supports this mill rate increase.

Following the proposed cuts to library budgets in 2017 by the provincial government, rescinded due to an outcry of public support for libraries, the provincial budgets have kept at a stable level. 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 Survey*. Follow-up is needed to obtain a final report of the overall review and any specific changes made. The implementation of this review is very important given the interconnectedness of our Saskatchewan-wide library system. FRPL continues to encourage the province to respect the value of libraries and has written to the provincial government in this regard.

A motion was made at Executive Committee on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021 "... that the City of Regina and Regina Public Library call on the province to increase financial support to our provincial libraries in recognition of the valuable roles they play in our communities, both during COVID and on an ongoing basis," with the intent that the City and the RPL write letters to the provincial government. This motion was defeated 6 to 5, with the main opposition to the motion being that the City should not be communicating with the province on single issues, but that all concerns should be bundled in discussions with the province. However, no doubt single letters and meetings are arranged on other issues, with the appropriate provincial

Ministers. A few years ago, in a City Council meeting discussing the RPL budget, former Councillor Mike O'Donnell suggested FRPL write a letter to the province asking for increased funding for items FRPL had flagged, which was done. The RPL has its own ways and means of communicating with the provincial government, the Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association being one group which has met with the provincial government in the past. However, a recommendation from Executive Committee and City Council may provide some support for further efforts by the RPL with the provincial government. The RPL is fortunate in that it has direct municipal funding from Regina taxpayers, but the RPL is also connected to an overall provincial library system - improvements to library services throughout the province will support all of us as Saskatchewan residents in promoting literacy, learning and democratic access to information. FRPL is asking Executive Committee to reconsider its decision about communicating to the provincial government and City Council to support specific communication about library funding across the province, especially when during this past year the RPL and libraries across the province have been community hubs and a unifying force in Saskatchewan.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic the Regina Public Library branches experienced a time of closure, from mid-March to mid-July 2020. At that time the RPL expanded its WIFI coverage so that people would be able to access the Internet outside and nearby library buildings. Library patrons were able to order books by phone or online and use curbside pickup and materials returns outside library branches. More resources were made available online. Participation in online programming increased. As part of a general move across Saskatchewan, late return fines have been eliminated during the COVID situation. In order to re-open safely the RPL reconfigured the physical layout and trained library staff in new library procedures. The RPL is to be commended for its efforts in working with staff and their union regarding the temporary lay-off and return-to-work process. Through an international effort, the RPL also loaned the use of some servers and computers to run simulations of protein movements in diseases to enhance scientists' understanding of COVID-19.

As happens each year, and now, even during the time of the pandemic, the RPL made innovations in its services and has plans for the future, as outlined in its 2021 budget submission.

- A lot of effort and funding has gone into online digital services, essential in these times. It is good to see that through learning kits for families and other means, RPL is recognizing that not everyone has a computer at home or online access, and is providing suitable resources to those library patrons.

- The RPL continues to contribute to Reconciliation through providing resources throughout all its branches, and this year, online programming honouring Indigenous cultures.
- Commitment to encouraging literacy in creativity has been shown in several ways, including online workshops with professional creators and the writer-in-residence program.
- The RPL's commitment to early learning and literacy continues.

Beyond what is noted in the RPL official budget document, the following is some detail on a positive development that has occurred this past year regarding Outreach Services. This past year Outreach Services has continued to provide Homebound Services and online book discussions have been made available. Due to spacing requirements and the need for a place to quarantine recently returned books, the Outreach Services room at Central Library was closed to the public. This necessity, coupled with an expanding view of how these services and equipment that assist people with visual challenges, has led to changes wherein equipment has been relocated within Central Library, and staff training, services and equipment has been provided at other library branches, making these services more accessible and part of the overall services provided to the public, rather than being isolated in a single room at Central Library.

The Dunlop Art Gallery, Film Theatre and Prairie History Room are essential components of the Central and Sherwood Village branches. Aside from increased access to online resources and microfilm collections from the Prairie History Room, there is not a lot of detail in the RPL's 2021 budget document on future plans for these areas.

With regard to last year's spending, we are wondering what will be the concrete outcomes of the funds spent on assessing and changing the logo and "branding" of the RPL.

It is noted that the fundraising priorities for RPL will be focused on literacy and technology.

RPL states that physical improvements are needed in 2021 at Central Library, and Connaught, Sherwood Village and Prince of Wales branches. More specifics on that would be helpful in understanding the library budget.

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.

## Central Library Renewal Process

Any changes to Central Library will be a major financial investment for the citizens of Regina. Also, City support may be required for any loans or other financial arrangements for work to be conducted, which will cost in the millions of dollars.

In 2019 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)*

RPL contracted the services of Colliers Project Leaders and KPMG to develop a needs assessment and project plan for the future of Central Library. Research for the plan started with review of previous reports and a public needs survey. This was followed by a community open house on February 5, 2020.

While the Board had expected the needs assessment and project plan to be ready in spring 2020, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic forced a temporary delay. Work has since continued.

On March 10, 2021 the RPL website noted that "... The next step in this plan is to gather public opinion about Central Library investment through random sample polling. The Owner's Representative [Colliers Project Leaders and KPMG] has contracted the services of a third party to conduct this polling in the next few weeks."

FRPL has contacted the RPL to ask: What survey company is doing the survey? When will the survey be done? What questions will they be asking? If it is a phone survey, it may be limited in that not everyone has a phone or is listed in the phone book.

### **Edifice thinking?**

The language on the RPL website seems to be supporting a foregone conclusion: a completely new Central Library building. But is this really the solution for Regina?

The current Central Library building is already a cultural hub. Do we need to tear it down to build a huge edifice building in downtown Regina? Can we not maintain the current building and create an addition? There are many needs and ideas identified by the RPL in its March 10, 2021 update, as well as in the many previous planning documents about Central Library. Perhaps some of the needs or desires of librarians can be met through satellite locations in downtown Regina, either newly constructed on vacant parking lot space or revitalization of existing downtown buildings? Do we need an expensive large edifice in downtown Regina? Could our model of library services be decentralized and democratic, emphasizing the value of neighbourhoods and walkable branches throughout the City?

There is a need for public spaces downtown, places that support learning, creativity and training. While the RPL is open to everyone and is a community hub, the City of Regina should be considering other additional venues that can provide public meeting spaces and opportunities for people.

With regard to the Central Library building being old, some improvements are needed. But we do not tear down our houses because the furnace needs replacing. In other countries, buildings have continued to exist and be useful after hundreds of years.

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 for its cherished Central Library. With renovations and/or expansion to the current property as originally designed, FRPL believes the current building can fulfill the intended mandate of being a community hub.

## **Central Library Economic and Cultural Value**

Libraries are about preserving and sharing knowledge. This knowledge is contained in books, in digital formats, in art, in music and in buildings and landscapes. Thus, preserving the public heritage embodied in the Central Library building is within the role of the Regina Public Library. Not every library building will necessarily have significant historical and cultural value, but the Central Library building does.

Central Library's location is both beautiful and practical, acting as Regina's downtown cultural hub. Central Library is within "Regina's Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District" (VPHCD), established by City of Regina Bylaw #9656 on May 27, 1996 under the provisions of the provincial Heritage Property Act. The current building, at 2311 - 12th Avenue, faces Frederick Todd's Victoria Park, replacing the earlier Carnegie Library (1912), the current Central Library building was opened in 1962. Central Library, the SaskPower Building (1963), and the Bank of Canada Building (1964) are quality mid-century buildings, all designed to sensitively integrate with earlier Victorian Revivalist buildings, including the 1926 Masonic Temple.

Furthermore, the value of this building to Regina's history is solidified by the fact that it was designed by a Regina engineering and architectural firm. Izumi, Arnott and Sugiyama. Izumi, who was raised in Regina and matriculated from Regina College in 1944, returned to Regina in 1954 after extensive architectural studies.

The 1962 library is an iconic example of modernist architecture, part of the exciting and innovative modernist movement, a material statement of our mid-century optimism. Modernism arose in the early part of the 20th century as a cultural movement in art, politics and science, reflecting the experience and values of modern industrial life and modern society. New images, materials and techniques were used. The old social constrictions and styles were left behind.

Modernism occurred throughout literature, fine arts and architecture, most evident in buildings designed from the 1930s to the 1960s (and beyond) expressed in the phrase "form follows function" and of minimalism. Modernism stressed the use of materials such as reinforced concrete, steel frames, curtain walls and ribbon windows. And in having these materials honestly viewed, rather than covered up by plaster or wallpaper or ornamentation. Designers preferred open plan interiors, filled with light and having a sense of spaciousness. Some international examples of modernist architecture include: Le Corbusier's 1927 Villa Savoye; Shreve, Lamb and Marmon's 1931 Empire State Building; Niemeyer's 1960 Palácio do Planalto

in Brasilia; Gropus and Mayer's 1911-13 Fagus Factory in Germany; Frank Lloyd Wright's 1935 Fallingwater in Pennsylvania; Utson's 1973 Opera House in Sydney Australia.

Some Saskatchewan examples of modernist architecture are: the original Mendel Art Gallery and the Faculty of Law at the University of Saskatchewan, both in Saskatoon; the Saskatchewan Power Corporation Headquarters, Regina Court of Queen's Bench building and the Central Library building in Regina; and the Chapel at Silton.

As we know, one important cultural discipline doesn't negate another: just as literature, in all of its forms creates a culture, so do heritage structures give cultural meaning, creating a context for the lives of citizens, as is shown in all world cultures.

The value of Central Library was confirmed nationally at "The Ordinary Amazing Symposium: The Cultural Value of Modernist Architecture" held in Regina in May 2007, with a declaration signed by national architects and Regina citizens.

*RPL's Central Library is a building of national, historical, cultural and architectural merit and urges City Council and the Library Board to find a way to keep and maintain and enhance the heritage values of this fine building consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada; as well as explore creative possibilities for a building enlargement that would complement the 1962 building, so it can continue to serve the changing needs of Regina's people, and enhance its key public spaces.*

Yet as we discuss the merits and economy of Central Library that have made this building a national treasure, it is personal experience that has brought this library alive and a feature of our downtown. The entrance foyer, facing the greenery of Victoria Park, is filled with light and leads to the magic of a Children's Library; an Outreach Unit, assisting people with visual challenges, seniors and those not easily able to leave home; a Literacy Department and its volunteers, the Dunlop Art Gallery, the RPL Film Theatre, and more, all adding to the vibrancy of downtown Regina.

As noted by Heritage Architect, Bernard Flaman (see Appendix), Central Library's flat roof, simple cubic composition and large areas of glass, are hallmarks of the modernist style. The durable split squares and polished slabs of granite cladding and aluminum modernist sunshades add texture to the exterior.

The sunshades, which fill the Reading Room with natural light, are reminiscent of the Architectural Design Museum in Palm Springs, with a similar welcoming entrance. Our entrance attractively faces the greenery of Victoria Park, its foyer filled with light and lined with boot racks. With good public transport links, Central Library's location is both beautiful and practical, acting as Regina's downtown cultural hub, adding to the vibrancy of downtown Regina.

### **Why Maintain the Central Library Building?**

No one argues against the location of the current Central Library building. Its usefulness and accessible geographical location add cultural dynamism and recreational and educational opportunities for all in downtown Regina. Central Library anchors city centre; and is close to bus for people without cars. People can also shop if need be, contributing to down town revitalization. Regina's Central Library, is not only an iconic example of modernist architecture, but an economic anchor for downtown Regina. Its central location and good public transport links make the building an easy trip for anyone without a vehicle, often new immigrants, who, like others, might also take advantage of literacy classes, pioneered in Canada by the Regina Public Library, and many more library offerings.

Green architectural building principles recognize that it is less expensive and more environmentally responsible to use the building that already exists, than tear it down, and take the remains to the landfill and rebuild. Recent engineering reports have stated that Central Library is a structurally sound quality building. Engineering reports also have stated that it is possible to build a third storey on the current building.

**"Thinking ahead," the 1962 Central Library Opening Day program noted directions for future expansion: "...if more space were needed, a tower could be built on the lot west of the building." Regina might look to the Winnipeg Public Library's Patkau addition and redesign created a useful social space, as an excellent elegant and economic way to 'rethink' Central Library.**

Friends of the Library firmly support the preservation of our Heritage Modernist Central Library.

## Conclusion

The RPL has a Strategic Plan, Service Plan and pillars, around which it structures its high-level reporting. These Plans are updated every three years, with general aims for each year. Following the train of thought for the library can be confusing, even for people familiar with library governance. In future budget documents it would be helpful if the plans for the year ahead could be expressed in a way that ordinary library patrons could relate to – “Next Year, Library Patrons Will See the Following When They Go Into a Library or Access Library Services Online”.

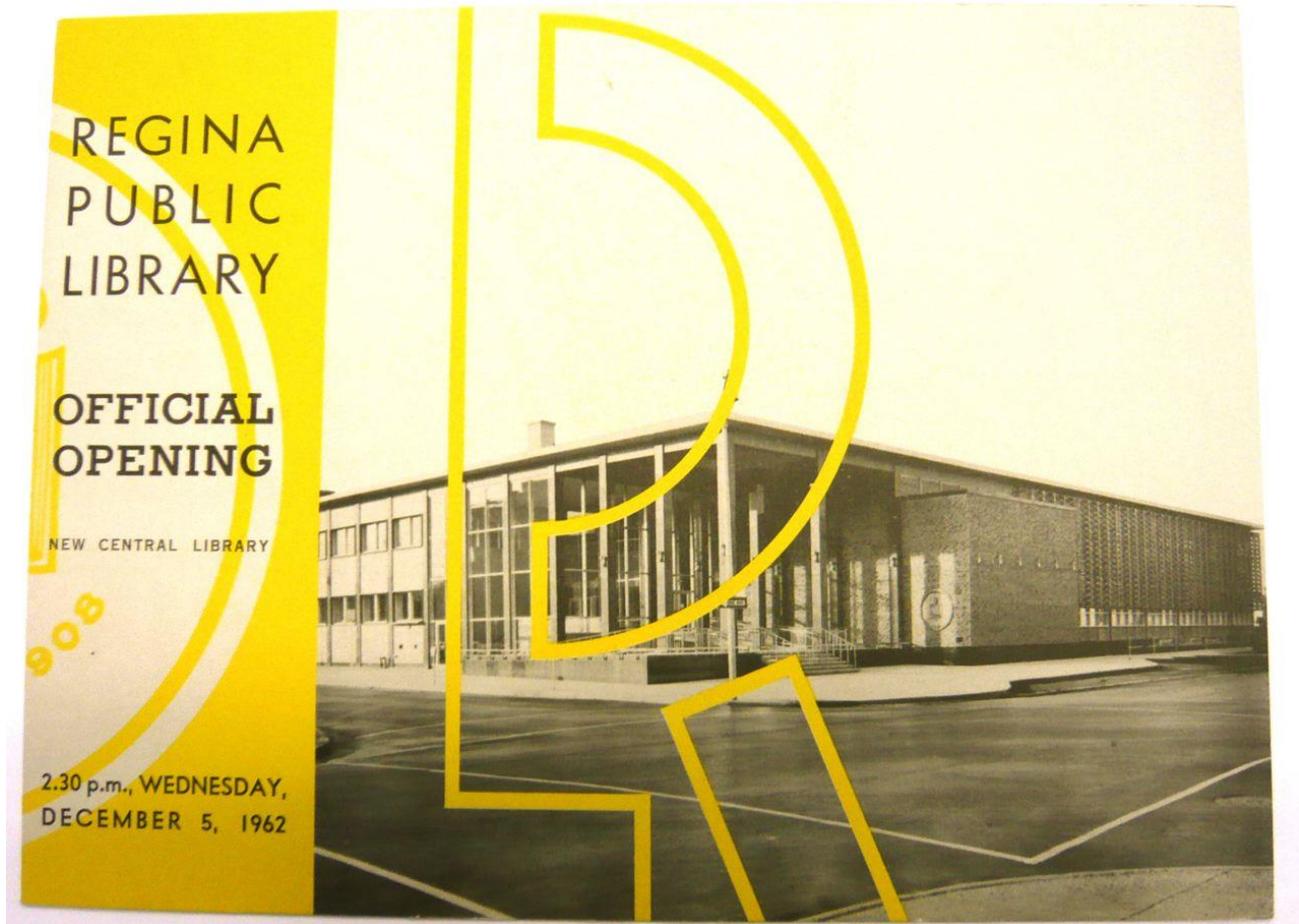
Importantly, we want to reiterate that the people who use their public library are not “customers”. Library patrons are not “customers” purchasing a service, they are citizens of Regina, owners of the library through their contributions to the taxes that support the library. This application of private enterprise commercial language is not appropriate. This use of the word “customer” is neither needed nor suitable in driving efforts to serve library patrons or attracting new library users.

Libraries are an essential component of all kinds of literacy and learning, whether in-person or digital. The RPL Central Library, previous bookmobiles and its library branches have been leaders in providing resources to the people of Regina. FRPL remains a strong supporter of the RPL. Its amazing staff and the interaction with the Regina community have made the RPL the great public service that it was in the past and is today. While support for libraries may have waned elsewhere, in Regina the value of these services is recognized by City Council and the people of Regina.

Sincerely,

Joanne Havelock,  
Chair, Friends of the Regina Public Library

## APPENDIX – CENTRAL LIBRARY



### **Regina's Central Library and Victoria Park**

*By Bernard Flaman, Heritage Architect*

When the original Carnegie Library was demolished in 1960, at the young age of 48, it was a brave new world: the ascendance of International Style Modernism, the predominant architectural style in Canada, saw many revival style buildings from the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century replaced with minimalist, modern structures.

The current Central Library, completed in 1962, was designed by the Regina architecture and engineering firm Izumi, Arnott and Sugiyama. Along with its neighbours around Victoria Park; the Bank of Canada building (1962) by Durnford, Bolton, Chadwick and Elwood of Montreal, and the Saskatchewan Power Corporation headquarters, an extraordinary interpretation of Brazilian Modernism designed by Regina architect Joseph Pettick (1963), the Library

reflected the arrival of modernism as a mainstream architectural style in Regina.

The Library's flat roof, simple cubic composition and large areas of glass, are hallmarks of the modernist style. Preliminary sketches indicated a much more ambitious project, with the Library and the Dunlop Art Gallery designed as two buildings separated by a plaza. The final design exhibits traces of the original idea, with the art gallery articulated as a separate object; a box that slides into the side of the library structure, like a giant drawer. The massing and architectural composition of the building reflect its functional components. While the exterior of the building may be austere, the cladding material comprised of various types of granite, the most durable stone for buildings, lends a rich and luxurious appearance. The aluminum sunshades add texture to the exterior and allow a generous amount of natural light into the interior without the problem of glare.

Izumi and Arnott were the architects in the firm and Sugiyama, the structural engineer. Known as "Joe" to his friends and colleagues, Kiyoshi Izumi had completed extensive architectural studies before returning to Regina to engage in practice.

Victoria Park appeared as the central square on the very first survey for Regina, the Canadian Pacific Railway plan of 1882. In 1907, while he was in Regina working on a design for Wascana Park, Frederick Todd of Montreal, Canada's first resident landscape architect, created a design for Victoria Park. Shortly after, institutional buildings, such as the Court House and the Carnegie library, began to replace the residential houses around the park. By the early 1960s, the International Style had arrived in Saskatchewan, reflected in three new buildings: the Regina Public Library, the Saskatchewan Power Corporation Headquarters, and the Bank of Canada Building, all completed between 1962 and 1963, adding an important layer to the buildings surrounding the park. It marks a moment when prosperity coincided with a significant period in architectural design.

The library addresses the park with a prominent double-height glass entry at the north-east corner. Here, the corner opens up to reveal the columned structure of the building and a sunken garden that provides a visual connection to the lower level. The entrance forms an inviting, generous and public gesture on the corner of Victoria Park, and shines like a beacon on even a cold, snowy winter evening. The ramps that cross over the courtyard are also modernist in nature and were often employed by the modernist master, le Corbusier, as part of an idea of "architectural promenade," where the act of entering allows the visitor to explore and experience important elements of the building. At the entrance to the library, token decorative

stone elements from the original Carnegie Library of 1912 were salvaged in an early attempt at heritage commemoration, if not conservation. The limestone columns from the 1912 building are arranged in the courtyard, and the original lintel stone, bearing the words, *Regina Public Library* is incorporated into the vestibule.

The interior of the building is characterized by a series of three major spaces: the entrance vestibule, the Dunlop Art Gallery, and the main reading room. All were conceived as tall spaces, however, a mezzanine was constructed in the reading room shortly after the library opened, to address a shortage of space. The vestibule, like the rest of the building contains expensive and durable materials, in this case, terrazzo flooring, and, in the same material, the unique boot racks. The benches with wood seating areas and heating ducts below still survive and offer comfort on a cold winter day. The vestibule features a large mural by Saskatchewan artist Douglas Morton. Inside the door, the window of the Dunlop Art Gallery is an important connection to the flow of foot traffic coming in and out of the library. It is perfectly located to attract library visitors, especially children, who may not otherwise think of visiting a gallery.



In 2012, the library celebrated its 50th birthday, and, indeed, is close to the same age as the 1912 building when it was demolished. This is at an awkward age for buildings; they often begin to suffer from the 50-year-old building syndrome. Symptoms include a run-down and shabby appearance due to chronic lack of maintenance, because of little appreciation or recognition for their heritage value. A closer look at the Regina Public Library reveals a beautifully designed building clad in the finest materials that would likely be unaffordable today.

Victoria Park is now over 125 years old, and its buildings and architectural styles represent the achievements of one of the most interesting periods in Regina history. Having been recognized as the only municipal heritage district in Saskatchewan, it is a valuable, rare, and fragile environment. New interventions must stem from an understanding and acceptance of what is already there and always contribute to, rather than detract from, historical layers that define Regina's civic square.

*Text from Biblio Files: A History of the Regina Public Library.  
University of Regina Press. 2017. Pages 244-247.*

*"Central Library (1962) is a good example of the International Modernist style. Architect Kioyshi Izumi, of Izumi, Arnott and Sugiyama, was a Regina boy who matriculated from Regina College in 1944, earned an architectural degree in 1948 from the University of Manitoba, and after a Pilkington Glass traveling scholarship where he spent a year studying the economics of town planning at the London School of Economics, he received the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Scholarship in 1950, which he used to complete a graduate degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in city and regional planning. He returned to Regina and teamed up with Gordon Arnott in 1954.*

*Bernard Flaman: The Sun Never Sets: Victoria Park in Context.  
Dunlop Art Gallery. 2008*