

September 20, 2022

Sean Quinlan  
Chair, Regina Public Library Board  
Regina Public Library  
2311 12th Avenue  
Regina SK S4P 0N3

Dear Mr. Quinlan:

Please include this letter in the public record of the September 27, 20022 Regina Public Library Board meeting.

As an almost daily user of the Regina Central Library services, I very much hope that such a serious issue as 'replacement' (demolition?) of the current building would entail public involvement, well-publicized announcements, and even a city-wide referendum.

It says much about the high regard people have for Central Library that it continues to be active and popular. This, despite the increase in home entertainment, branch libraries and suburban shopping centres, all of which make it less necessary to go to the downtown core area. Central Library is still a vital attraction in that respect, and without it, much of the incentive for visiting the downtown core would disappear.

Comments from past Survey results (available on the RPL website under 'Central Library renewal') seem to indicate that most of the people visiting and using Central Library are expecting the continued existence of the building, albeit with necessary maintenance and additional facilities.

In the reports, there seem to be many comments on Central's supposed lack of adequate floor space. I have rarely found the main floor overcrowded and have seen the mezzanine seating sparsely occupied for the most part, except for a concert or lecture event. Seating on each side of the main floor has always been available as well. I was wondering if the question of more space relates to meeting rooms.

During the interim period between the proposed demolition of Central and a new library construction, what happens to Central's clientele, staff, materials, etc.? Are the costs of warehousing, relocating, shipping, and safe storage facilities all being taken into account, or are they yet to be worked out?

What about the many thousands of people who annually visit Central? The impact on the downtown could be long-lasting and negative if people get accustomed to using other libraries and do not return to a rebuilt Central.

The 'Building Assessment Report' compiled and issued by the Group 2 Architecture firm in 2015, gave what appeared to be a thorough and comprehensive review of the building's requirements, including estimates for short, medium, and long-term costs. It also appeared to suggest that, overall, Central Library was structurally sound at the time of assessment.

The main focus seems to be fixed on advancing the third option of “replacement” i.e., a new building, rather than either of the other two options (mentioned in the Deloitte Central Library – Business Case – Phase 1 analysis report of 2017), that of simply maintaining the current building and that of both maintaining and renovating Central. The Deloitte analysis also noted that both the substructure and superstructure were sound, as did the Group2 Architecture assessment, released in 2015. The Deloitte study said as well that the west side “courtyard” is under-utilized which perhaps make that area a suitable site for any required expansion in the future.

There are a number of vintage buildings in the city (the old Regina Campus, Darke Hall, the old Post Office Building currently housing the Globe Theatre) many of which had to undergo renovations and repurposing, even in some cases complete refurbishing of their interiors. But their heritage value and unique style was recognized and appreciated even though presumably their continued maintenance and repairs have required significant financial investment. Considering the popularity and daily usage of Central Library, why should it be considered less worthy of preservation and more disposable than those other examples, previously mentioned.

I feel that no mere “analysis” of a physical structure is able to truly “assess” the emotional attachment and/or nostalgic attraction a building can evoke in its clientele. If “cost” was the sole factor involved in such cases we would likely have no historic structures to speak of anywhere.

In conclusion, it would be a great loss for so many of Central Library's clients and the City itself should this unique heritage building be designated for 'replacement' without knowing that all avenues had been explored in the effort to continue its usefulness, preservation, and ability to serve Regina's citizenry.

A written response to these questions would be very much appreciated. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Shawne Arzab  
Regina