



Mr. Zenon Zuzak, Chair
Multitype Library Board
8-1945 Hamilton Street
REGINA SK S4P 2C8

May 1, 2007

Mayor Pat Fiacco
City of Regina
Box 1790, 2476 Victoria Avenue
Regina, SK S4P 3C8

Dear Mayor Fiacco and Councilors:

On behalf of the members of the Multitype Library Board, I am commenting on the recent report from the City Clerk and City Manager to the Finance and Administration Committee, regarding the City of Regina Archives. We have three primary concerns with the proposed restructuring outlined in that report.

1. Access to Information as a Public Right

Canadian librarians have long advocated for an inclusive and educated information society: one where access to information was equally shared, readily obtainable with full respect to intellectual freedom, with provision of the appropriate professional searching and interpretive skills necessary to ensure timely and accurate access to information.

We are therefore concerned with the proposal to cut professional staff and limit access to the resources of the City, at the Archives. This is not a decision we believe should be undertaken without full consideration of its possible ramifications.

The records maintained by the City, documenting municipal history, together with records from private citizens relating to Regina families, business, and organizations, collectively represent a unique resource for citizens of the city and the province. We are gravely concerned that access to these resources may be harmed, first, without a professional archivist to provide the appropriate collection development, cataloguing and reference services and second, by limiting hours for the public. A "by appointment" policy may provide the appearance of accessibility but does little to offer ease of access and in fact, may result in both limited availability of the City's archival collection, and less productive city staff as they attempt to respond to requests on an ad hoc basis.

The Report does not mention smoke, water, or entry alarms currently at the City Archives building, but we are concerned if these are not in place, the collection may be at risk if lengthy periods of time

with no site visits by staff are anticipated.

Finally, we would respectfully urge caution on the issue of user fees. These should not be such that they could interfere with the ability of some citizens to access information – particularly, given the public ownership of these records.

2. Availability of other collections in lieu of the City Archives

The Report outlines the mandate of the City Archives specifically with reference to other local institutions. Among those cited are the Legislative Library, the University of Regina Library, and the Prairie History Room at the Regina Public Library.

We appreciate awareness of the collections held by these institutions. It is true that, collectively, they maintain excellent resources relating to local, Regina and prairie history. However, it would be misleading to suggest that these collections, predominantly of published works, could in any way replace or make redundant the collection of historic records maintained by the City Archives. The materials held by the City Archives and by these libraries are fundamentally different, and although collectively are valuable resources, essentially serve different functions, are utilized in a different manner by researchers, and are better understood as augmenting each other than in competition.

Moreover, we are concerned that some readers of this report may erroneously assume any one of these libraries might “step in” and take over management of the City’s archival resources. None is in a position to do so.

3. Dissemination of Information as a Public Good

The Multitype Library Board has been actively promoting the value of cooperation among the heritage and information providers in Saskatchewan, through the formation of a Digital Alliance. We firmly believe resources from the province’s libraries, archives, museums, and other institutions deserve wide access and can provide a valuable service in education and community-building exercises. With widespread expertise in both professions, we have been focusing initially on the opportunities for library and archives to collaborate on digital initiatives highlighting aspects of Saskatchewan history and society.

This has been, and continues to be, a cooperative and collaborative approach between allied professions. Several interesting initiatives have already been produced as joint projects: again, augmenting library with archival resources has proven an effective and unique means by which to highlight our history and create products of value for schools and lifelong learning.

The City of Regina Archives, through its on-line exhibit “Regina: The Early Years,” has been one of the institutions clearly interested in, and able, to enhance public access to its holdings through the Internet. We would welcome future collaboration with the City Archives on such projects; and we would as certainly view the closure, or reduction of services from that institution, as a considerable loss to the people of Regina and the province. Reductions in services at any archive, library, or museum, limit the potential for collaborative endeavours and diminish the overall ability to provide information.

The Multitype Library Board was established under The [*Libraries Co-operation Act*](#) to optimize the capacity and outcomes of Saskatchewan Libraries by enabling all types of libraries and information providers to work co-operatively in a multitype library system. It provides a forum for appointed representatives from all library sectors in Saskatchewan to meet and discuss ways in which libraries can co-operate to share resources and services. The Board represents the public, school, post-

secondary education libraries as well as archives, special libraries and the Provincial Library.

Sincerely,

Zenon Zuzak, Chair
Multitype Library Board

cc:

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