



A Difficult Decision for Rosemount Library: *Little to be gained in OPL choice to renovate*

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Change is coming to Rosemount Library. At a recent Ottawa Public Library Board (OPL) meeting, a decision to renovate the 100 year old library building, at a cost of \$2 million, rather than build a modern facility was made. In the view of Josh Nutt, Chair of the Rosemount Expansion and Development (READ) group, this is a stop-gap measure that lacks long term vision.

“The current building is completely inadequate,” said Nutt. “Users sit on the floor or work in cramped working spaces among stacks. The current building has 6,089 square feet of space. There is no indication that the board-approved renovation would provide significantly increased space. Carlingwood, St-Laurent and Alta Vista branches, serving comparable populations of approximately 40,000, have more than double the space, children and teen areas, meeting rooms, ample computer stations and working areas.”

In READ’s view, the OPL decision was based on a flawed and misleading business case, which considered the costs of identified options but not the benefits. The Government of Canada's guidelines for business cases state the first characteristic should describe "benefits". Two previous business cases prepared for the new main branch considered both costs and benefits.

“The business case also used misleading data about population and growth,” he continued. “It defines the Rosemount user population as part of a "central west geographic area" running from Bronson to Woodroffe, north of the Queensway and excluding the Civic Hospital area. But other documents prepared by the OPL define the Rosemount area from Bronson to Churchill, including the Civic Hospital area.”

The report concludes Rosemount needs only 7,500 square feet of space. Yet the Board-selected option does not indicate any additional space. This was not questioned by the board.

Nor was there clarity on the length of time the branch will be closed. During renovations, users would access a kiosk-like operation. In the end, they return to a slightly expanded space at best.

“READ realizes the Board had no real options,” Nutt continued. “Since the City of Ottawa has identified no funding source to provide adequate infrastructure to support the infill it is encouraging in inner city neighbourhoods. Infill is rampant in the Rosemount area. For the Library Board, finding \$2 million is a stretch and READ appreciates that.”

What’s next? Public consultations will be held. The answer will likely restate the findings of previous consultations , "an adequate, modern and larger facility". A municipal election next year may bring a new Council, which may feel differently about supporting library infrastructure in the inner city. READ will continue to push for a fully adequate facility for our area.

“The Rosemount library has been treated inequitably for many years,” concluded Nutt. “The City and the Library Board must come to grips with finding a funding solution that is fair to the 41,000 residents of the Rosemount catchment area.”