



**Ottawa Public Library Board Meeting
2018 Budget
December 5, 2017**

**Presented by Josh Nutt
Chair, READ Rosemount**

Good evening.

READ and others already spoke passionately about the need to expand the Rosemount Library at the October board meeting. Rather than rehashing the case for expanding Rosemount, today I want to use my five minutes to talk about how the OPL funds capital projects more broadly.

As urban neighbourhoods intensify, there will be more pressure placed on existing infrastructure. A primary example is the City's planning rules which call for greater intensification around transit stations. In our neighbourhood around Tunney's Pasture, it is not uncommon for what was previously a single family home to be replaced with a fourplex. There are even several projects on the go where single lots are being transformed into 20+ unit buildings. While the City's pro-intensification position is laudable, the City needs to make sure that the necessary supporting infrastructure is in place. This includes a wide variety of hard infrastructure, social services, and libraries.

READ believes that the library board can be more than a microcosm of City Council where the overarching priority seems to be to keep taxes low above all else — sometimes to the detriment of services and infrastructure. We believe that the library board has the unique opportunity to advocate for library services in Ottawa. One way that this could be achieved would be to develop a comprehensive long-term strategic initiative that contemplates capital renewals and new builds where necessary. The key would be ensuring that the board has sufficient long-term and predictable funding allotted from City Council.

Other cities are doing exactly this. They are developing long-term plans and committing funding to libraries.

Winnipeg's city council approved funding for a 2017-2023 long-term Library Facility Redevelopment Strategy to rebuild, relocate, expand, or significantly redevelop nine existing branches in mature neighbourhoods. This includes the expansion of two Carnegie facilities opened in 1915. Winnipeg will be spending \$55-60 million, all from its Mill Rate Support Budget.

Edmonton is currently renewing two existing branches along with its main branch. This is all part of Edmonton's long-term capital plan which between 2006 and 2018 allotted over \$75 million for the renewal, expansion, or renovations of six existing library branches. This is in addition to funding for new libraries, such as a new suburban branch with space to be shared with a community centre which is currently underway.

READ would like to see this sort of commitment to long-term capital funding in Ottawa. A long-term plan would ensure that funding is available so that infrastructure does not become obsolete, and it would create predictability so that the focus can be on planning rather than searching for funding sources.

To come full circle, Rosemount was on the City's priority list and is now seeing funding in the 2018 OPL budget. Back in 2015, OPL staff were quoted in *Ottawa Community News* talking about how difficult it was to find money to expand Rosemount from the current expansion envelope. So the OPL sought to have half of the \$2 million needed for Rosemount to be funded by the Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program. It's good that the OPL was seeking to take advantage of this federal funding, but this isn't a sustainable way to fund libraries. Although federal funding didn't come through for Rosemount, the Sunnyside renovation is an example of a project partially funded by federal and provincial money. When a new library is built in Riverside South, it will be largely funded through development charges, a fairly complicated funding formula which doesn't help with the renewal of urban branches. Meanwhile Rosemount was not awarded federal funding and does not have the same access to development charges as suburban areas. The result for Rosemount was a business case which set a hard cap on funding for redevelopment at \$2 million: a cap which effectively eliminated any possibility of expansion. All said, it seems to READ that the OPL relies on a complex array of funding sources, and those sources aren't always predictable. That is why READ supports a comprehensive long-term funding strategy for capital projects, similar those strategies being implemented in other cities.

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What is READ Rosemount?

READ is a community group that has been working for over two years advocating for an expanded and redeveloped Rosemount library – a branch of the Ottawa Public Library in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Through systematic engagement with the community, elected officials and library staff, READ has determined that the current site of the Rosemount library is too small to meet the community's current and future needs. Join us in this exciting community-building project.