

To: Mayor Guthrie & City Councillors

Re: Guelph Central Library Decision

I estimate the library saves me hundreds of dollars per year. It supplies my reading material, viewing material and access to databases & documents for research purposes. While nobody wants to pay more taxes than they have to, I feel investing in library services is a worthy endeavour.

There is no doubt that it is an investment in the future! The library is the one local resource that is well-used by all segments of the population including newcomers whose first language is not English, children, teens, adults, seniors, businesses and the disadvantaged. You don't need expensive equipment or special privilege to use the library. It's a welcoming place where anyone can go, where staff are willing to help with all manner of questions, and where unconditional support is offered .

The current library is over-crowded & inaccessible to many. The central library is responsible for both providing public services & supporting the branch libraries in our growing city. What many do not realize is that space is required, not only for the public & for reference services, but for an array of technical services too. Acquisitions, cataloguing, computer services, and archival storage are critical aspects of library service. The downtown building is simply not equipped to allow staff to do a proper job.

Guelph is growing at a dizzying pace. The City wants to welcome new residents by approving more and more apartments, condos and entire subdivisions but is unwilling to provide adequate library services to support the population growth? If not now, then when? A new facility will never cost less in the future and this is a time, in pandemic recovery, when infrastructure investment is needed more than ever.

You will hear from people who don't want to spend a dime on anything. They don't value literacy, education, immigrant services, nor a strong vibrant community. They say they have never been in a library as though that is something to be proud of. Well, I can tell you I have never been in a sports arena, nor used a community center, and have rarely taken a bus but I'm happy that my tax dollars support those initiatives because I know others value them and they make Guelph a better place to live. The library is the same. It's a critical quality-of-life service that has been overlooked for a long time.

I also feel that many residents are reluctant to support public building construction because of the disappointments in past years with City Hall and the Police Services building expansion. Accept the changes to the plan & let the Library be the example that shows Guelph can complete a much-needed project that enhances downtown & comes in on budget. I'm confident you can accomplish that.

Another point that I have not seen mentioned is the work of the volunteer Friends of the Library (I am not a member). Here you have a group of supporters (arguably the most successful in the entire country) that has raised over \$100 000 towards furnishing a new facility. This speaks volumes to the commitment of Guelph residents.

This is an opportunity for council to finally carry through after all the studies and business cases that show a new central library is needed. It doesn't have to be extravagant but it does have to provide space necessary to support the growing population's needs. And, in this case, you have a chance to support downtown Guelph at the same time. Please show some vision and get this project underway!

Linda Davis