SEVEN OAKS ADULT LEARNING & IMMIGRANT SERVICES CENTRE

950 Jefferson Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R2P 1W1
Telephone: 204-632-1716 Fax: 204-632-1889

March 10, 2020

Library Redevelopment Strategy

Dear Members of City Council:

The wards in North Winnipeg, such as old Kildonan, have the highest proportion of immigrants settling in Winnipeg since before 2011, as evident by the data provided by the Government of Manitoba, and recently by the University of Winnipeg, Institute of Urban Studies.

Since 2012, in the Library Redevelopment Strategy there has always been a plan for a library to better serve the growing area needs of North Winnipeg. It is a serious concern to learn (as a service provider and user) that this new library has been deleted from this long term strategy and that it no longer appears in the proposed budget.

Libraries provide such valuable spaces for gathering, but also for programing and resources. Families with pre-school age children need libraries in particular with the looming cuts in pre-school programing staring in July, 2020. Where will these young families go for support, resources and much needed early years programming? The first five years are the most important in a child's life. Seniors are the next large demographical group who would negatively feel the impact of not having a library in the north of Winnipeg. There is a large senior's population in the north of Winnipeg. Many are isolated and there is limited access to programs largely.

New immigrants number one priority is to secure employment and can have spaces where people can have access to computers and internet is imperative, especially considering most job postings are on-line. Libraries are often the only study space for students on the weekend and evening where they can study in a quiet space that also provides computer access. Our newcomer clients and students all use the library in their first 3-5 years of settlement. The library offers books and resources in various languages, dual languages and in plain language. Immigrants often ask how they can improve their language at home, reading books is the number one answer, and access to a library in the north is vital to achieve this goal.

Seven Oaks School Division is one of the few school divisions who builds a school almost every year or two to meet the growing population in our community. We have over 7 births a day in our area, and this has been the case for over 8 years. It is critical and important that this library stays in the strategy and is built.

Sincerely,

Jana McKee
Program Manager
Seven Oaks Immigrant Services