LA MAISON DES ARTISTES VISUELS FRANCOPHONES

Esteemed members of the Executive Policy Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present our concerns to you today.

As president of la Maison des artistes visuels, a not-for-profit art gallery located in the historic City Hall at 219 Provencher, I wish to state that we support the proposals presented today by Councillor Allard, and the community criteria recommended to you by the Francophone community as presented to you by the Société de la francophonie manitobaine.

The greatest reason for our concerns are that, as managers and custodians of the garden, we have been working on the development of the Sculpture Garden in partnership with the City of Winnipeg, other levels of government, and other key agencies since 2003. It seems incredible that City Planners did not look into the history of the past two decades when deciding to put the prime land of 219 Provencher and 212 Dumoulin up for sale in 2019.

They would have discovered that the City of Winnipeg committed funds in a tripartite agreement for the beautification of the civic centre at 219 Provencher in 2007. It was the same year that the land was declared surplus - without the knowledge of the community. As well, that same year the Winnipeg Arts Council commissioned the first sculpture installed there. It remains in the City of Winnipeg Collection, and its preservation is governed by the City's Art policy.

It appears to us now that "the left hand knew not what the right hand was doing".

La Maison's contracts with the City have been agreements made in good faith, where La Maison accepts and assumes the costs for the project management of each commission, costs for the infrastructure of each sculpture (footings underground, electrical work for illumination, etc) and the care and maintenance of the artwork and the grounds. We have been excellent tenants of 219 Provencher and our physical proximity to the garden allows us to do this work in the best interest of the City and the community.

Because of statements made by City administrators at the Standing Committee on Planning and Development meeting of November 16th, 2020, we are not confident that the City administrators have a fulsome appreciation of the site, nor that they will use the appropriate community-related criteria in reviewing the proponent submissions to RFP 982-2019. We must admit that we are afraid for the future of the Jardin de sculptures and its infrastructure.

We work in symbiosis with our sister organization Les Amis des arts visuels-depending on the funds generated by the foundation of which M. Laurencelle is chairperson- to do our work. "Les Amis " relies on the Maison des artistes' administrative staff (as does the City of Winnipeg) for all physical requirements related to the Garden, maintaining the 5 sculptures and the plantings, and all repairs. The Garden and La Maison des artistes are inseparable. We are not convinced that a new proprietor of 219 Provencher will have adequate appreciation for the investments made in the Garden, and its position as a gathering-place for the community. To date, there has been *no* communication with any RFP proponent, at *any* time.

Over nearly 20 years, the City has worked *with us* to develop and invest in the property. We worked hand in hand with elected officials and administrators to transform a neglected parcel of land to a beautiful, world-class green space in the core of historical Saint Boniface that features artworks of national and international importance.

At this time, RFP 982-2019 is proceeding for the sale of the St.Boniface City Hall building -and the City planners have suggested in 'Appendix F' of the same RFP that the land that the Jardin des sculptures stands on should be considered for future subdivision. The City appears to have lost sight of its commitments: we wish to preserve them.

We want to continue to work in partnership with the City in every way possible to remove any threat to the long-term viability and enjoyment of this Sculpture Garden. Our desire is for the continuation of a long-term vision for the Garden, ensuring that it continues to contribute to the culture and economic development of this community.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Desilets
President, La Maison des artistes visuels
francophones du Manitoba, Inc.
January 19th, 2021.