

Dec. 02, 2008

## **\$26,000,000 Library Yes, Keeping Streets Cleared of Snow No**

Last night the majority of the Gonadless voted to blow **10 plus more million dollars** on a library that will not be fully used for the next **75** years if ever. But as bad as such a huge unnecessary expenditure was voted for, it was done without regard for those who will have to pay for it and not one word was spoken about increased operating costs. So this morning, I decided to try and find out what it has cost annually to run the present library. To my total dismay I could find nothing about budgets or operating expenses for the library, either on the library web-site or the city web-site. There are the cities financial statements but nothing in them separates library figures. On the library site there is nothing that states anything about budgets or finance.????? Anyway I have e-mailed the treasury dept. for this info. I also e-mailed the library contact by the name of Chatten. Thinking that maybe board members would have such info I sent my request to <mailto:board@orilliapubliclibrary.ca> only to have it sent back undeliverable. It will be interesting to see how long it will take and many hoops I will have to jump through to get information which should be readily available.

You may remember my article the other day when I wrote that Council wants to spend millions more on the library than is necessary. I suggested that as long as our roads are not being properly cleaned and maintained there should be no extra monies spent on these projects for ego's sake. After a 7 to 2 vote to spend the extra unnecessary **\$10,000,000** councillor Cipolla, who by the way voted for this waste made an inquiry. It seems that he has had complaints from folks on George St. They had not had a sander or plow on their street for more than 3 days. One lady who has a smaller vehicle complained that her car was bottoming out on the accumulated snow and ice. So there you have it **\$26,000,000** for a library while people are damaging their cars on ice and snow build up and it isn't even winter yet.

Now before you start thinking this is nothing more than an isolated incident think again. I was up in the area of Bay St. and Maple Dr. yesterday afternoon. I lived in that area for 12 years and know it historically on how it was served. Drinkwater drive used to be the worst street in Orillia for being not plowed. We used to bottom out our half ton and our cars on the thick ice build up in the middle. There used to be such huge ice build up in the middle of the road that it was almost a daily occurrence to pick up exhaust and other car parts. As I drove the Bay St. extension I found that it is not being cleaned either and most likely hadn't seen a plow for at least 3 or 4 days. In fact it is simply unsafe as cars come around the bends. This road runs into Drinkwater and it too was no better than the tracks our ancestors made with their oxcarts. Same was true as I continued to turn left off Jarvis on to Canice St. towards the Park. There too one took their life in their hands to try and negotiate the street. No money to clear streets but **\$10,000,000** more for ego building???? By the way I went over to Wilson Point Rd. which is a Severn Township responsibility and it was plowed clean. Same snowfalls same day, same time but cleaned. Certainly makes one think doesn't it.????? So is your street cleaned properly or even regularly???? If not maybe you will be able to go to this new monument to ego when it's built by snowmobile. Once there you will be able to develop your intellect and hopefully come up with a plan for cleaning and maintaining our roads with out it costing any money??? Maybe all those intellects which according to Packet letter writer Clare White thinks there is a shortage of in

Orillia could come with how roads could be cleaned and maintained without having to pay for it??? Of course the cause of all this lack of desire to acquire intelligence is caused by not having a **\$26,000,000** library. If I read Mr. White's letter correctly the only intelligent Orillian is one who did not grow up here. The way he goes on, one must believe that a majority of Orillian's don't even know how to read and don't or can't think.

"Thinking adults use that facility, but, as well, they want to see it contributing to the next generation's understanding of our society, and to its competence in reading and thereby in the use of our language".

Growing up and living in this area for the past 47 years I must say that I and my wife who is a 54 year resident we can both read. My children who were born down the street from the current library and educated in our local schools can both read. My daughter has her Honours BA from Trent University and attended Trent for an extra year after graduation developing her intelligence further. Beginning in January she will be starting at Fleming to improve her intellectual ability further. All this in spite of having been born, raised and educated in Orillia. Imagine her being able to do any of this having only this old inadequate library????

My son too has failed miserably having been deprived of a **\$26,000,000** library. He completed his primary and high school in Orillia as well, then graduated from Georgian College from the 3 year marketing program. He then must have decided that because he is an intellectually deprived Orillian to pursue his quest for his Honours BA from Laurentian University, where is now finishing his last year at the Sudbury Campus, where he continues to excel in the 90 to mid 90's percent. All I can say is that had my kids had that **\$26,000,000** library they might have hit the 100% percent mark???

So are my children the exception? I think not Mr. White. A nephew who like my children is a product of Orillia, is finishing up at Dalhousie and will be finally beginning his working life as a Physicist. He too completed a College degree before deciding he wanted more intellectual challenge. All this without a **\$26,000,000** library. Believe me there are more stories like these young people as they are not the exception but the rule. Mr. Rowe your characterization of Intelligence and how it is achieved couldn't be more wrong. We have some of the most intelligent electricians, plumbers, labourers, mechanics, carpenters, truck drivers and more than you will find anywhere. (OK! we are lacking intelligence in our politicians but hey politics will do that to some) All have become intelligent without a **\$26,000,000** library. A library is but a very small cog in a very large wheel of life. Yes we need a library. Yes we need a library that has the size and tools within it to satisfy demand. A **\$13,000,000** library would do no less, and if you can't see that, then I feel sorry for you. The building and it's grandness will never make people intelligent. It is the work that the parents, family, friends, neighbours, teachers and the community as a whole invests in our young people that will determine their intelligence. A **\$26,000,000** or a **\$100,000,000** library simply can't do anything without all those I have listed.

jim tolnai

Dec. 03, 2006

## How Much Does it Cost to Operate the Library???

Yesterday I decided to look into the operating cost of the library. I couldn't find any information on the library web-site nor on the 'cities'. So I sent an e-mail to the treasurer who sent me off copies of the library budget for 2002 to 2007. I have attached this pdf file for your convenience.

In David Rowe's impassioned appeal It's Time to be Selfish Orillia making his case for spending

\$26,000,000 for the new library. David furnished us with some statistics which I questioned as to value and have now made my inquiries. Here is what David wrote about statistics.

Consider the figures of the last 10 years of library service:

- \* more than 2.6 million books and recordings borrowed
- \* almost 92,000 people attending our programs
- \* nearly 25,000 library users registered
- \* more than 400,000 computer uses counted
- \* more than 300,000 requests for information
- \* nearly two million physical visits to the library.

I totaled the statements that Bob Ripley supplied for six years 2001 to 2007 and then projected backward for the first 4 years of the ten David is speaking of for a total operating cost of \$12,849,185. So let's take the last item on David's list (nearly 2,000,000 visits). As this represents everyone on the items above this one, it's very easy to see what it costs for each visit. It's easy to see that every time someone walked into the library it cost \$6.42. Is that good value for the community??? If you look at the first line of David's list (more than 2.6 million books and recordings borrowed then cost per item borrowed comes to \$4.94 each. Is that good value???

I don't know nor do I want to judge. Anytime I have used the library I was grateful for it being there. But should we really be building a **\$26,000,000** facility when other communities double our size are building wonderful facilities for half that. I myself have never felt claustrophobic, crowded or uncomfortable in the present library. I have found the information I was looking for and had excellent help from volunteers and staff. I have visited the library in the morning and afternoon during the week and on weekends. I have never felt that the facility or service was inadequate. But then that just maybe me.

For those who are so passionate and feel that we need a new luxury library I ask you to think about this. If you take an extra **\$13,000,000** plus the additional operating costs it can only be done with putting the community back into huge debt. When all the other users of facilities come to get their wants met, you won't be able to say no we can't afford it. There are people lined up with their hands out and **30,000** people simply can't afford to fill all wants without going bankrupt. Anyway if this library is built the present operating costs can only increase. Today we spend **\$1,495,695** per year for operating a 20,000 sq. ft. facility. My research says that new facility operating costs on average increase by a minimum of **28%**. That will add an additional burden of **\$418,794** if we can be average. That will result in total operating cost of **\$1,914,489** annually. That does not include any finance charges and believe me money will have to be borrowed and additional taxes collected. You see it's not just about a building but what it costs to operate year in and year out.

Will people flock by the thousands to the library because it's new? Will people use the library more. I don't think so. There will still be all the other activities which stop people from going there now. There will still only be 7 days in a week and 24 hours in a day. Better facilities yes. Building for the sake of someone's ego no. Like with the MURF the library is an ego build not a what we need build. Egos cost big money because, usually those with them aren't paying the bill out of their own pockets. By the time this project is built I guarantee that operating costs will be **\$1,000,000** more per year than now and will be at least **\$2,500,000** annually increasing by at least 5% each year. If use doesn't increase then the cost of each visit to the library will be \$12.50. Is that reasonable??? Can we

afford it? As I was watching the news tonight, President Elect Obama was saying how he is aware that libraries all over the US were being shut down because of a lack of funds. But in Orillia we go ahead with buying a library twice the price of what we will need for the next 75 years if ever. With the advent of computers and ever more powerful search engines, the day will come when children will be taken to the library not to use it but as a history lesson of what the old days were like. Except for the digital service which will be heavily used, books will still be around but used less and less and more as a novelty. With wireless Internet and portable computers one will be able to sit in their car or in a restaurant and do their research or read a book on line.

Last week I visited my son up in Sudbury. He took me for a tour of Laurentians' library. It was about 6pm on Saturday night and the library was pretty much deserted. As I walked through their computer section I was surprised at how few machines they had, considering there are about 8,000 students. But as my son pointed out, most of the people attending not only have a computer but most have two. One in their quarters and the portable in their backpacks. That is the future, and that is with today's technology. Imagine where we will be ten years from now. Every room, every apartment on campus is wired and the whole campus is wireless for those laptops. Just a few months ago there was a news item about children 18 years and under which caught my attention. This item said that 100% of 18 year olds and under are on the Internet. The first generation to be 100% computerized has arrived. Next year every one 19 or younger, the following year 20 and under etc. Will there still be a need for libraries in 10 or 20 years? Specialized ones I'm sure. Just log into any library anywhere in the world and you will find digital services available <http://www.orilliapubliclibrary.ca>. Right now it is some what limited, but in 10 to 20 years everything will be on there and available at the touch of a button no matter where you are.

jim tolnai