

Regarding Conexus Credit Union and Brandt Industries developments in Wascana Park:

“Younger people – and future generations for that matter – may be more inclined to take Wascana Centre for granted, but that need not be considered a catastrophe. Londoners tend to take Hyde Park for granted, but one can imagine the deafening chorus of protest that would greet any proposal that seemed to threaten its integrity.” *W.A. Riddell, 1992, “The Origin and Development of Wascana Centre”*

Riddell’s optimism is now overshadowed by the very future that he could not imagine; priceless public land deemed available for private enterprise; Wascana Park for commerce. Wascana Park was defended against commercial interests since the 1962 legislation of the Wascana Centre Act and the inception of the Wascana Centre Authority, a joint governing body consisting of provincial and municipal government and the university,. Even the 2016 Wascana Centre Master Plan ruled out the proposal of commercial development.

“The [master] plan deals with a fear that has arisen in the minds of some people that the open spaces might be perceived as empty sites waiting for some developer to construct buildings for office space or other use. If this happened, the parkland characteristic would be seriously eroded.” *W.A. Riddell, 1992, “The Origin and Development of Wascana Centre”*

Today, with construction fencing up and trees down, citizens are told that the Conexus and Brandt buildings are a done deal. Public consultations were held in July 2016, per Cathy Warner, University of Regina (*Letter, Regina Leader Post, June 21, 2018*). The 2016 Master Plan was ignored, and then abolished. The erosion has begun.

In 2017 the Wascana Centre Authority and the Act, which had stipulated the master plan process and the oversight of the Authority, was quietly repealed by the province (by whose grace the university is chartered through *The University of Regina Act, 1972*, and through whom the city is accorded power through *The Municipalities Act, 2015*). Also repealed are the troublesome restrictions on development in the park. The government has the authority to do so, but fails in its accompanying responsibility to act on behalf of the people – people past, in the heritage of the park; people present, in the current enjoyment and utilization of the park; and people future, who may never fully know the green marvel in the brown prairie.

I call on the provincial government to put in place clear and lasting legislative protections against further commercial development of the park. If the government refuses, the intended symbolism built into the park is unavoidable. In the 1913 high-minded Mawson plan for this beautiful park, which was never fully realized, the Lieutenant Governor was to reside across the lake from the East Wing of the Legislature. Near the sight-line that gracefully cuts from the building formerly used for the Wascana Centre Authority to the East Wing would have been a small dock, where the Queen’s representative would be ferried to the Legislature to bring the Queen’s authority for ceremonial occasions. It is then fitting, or more honest, to place a banker’s headquarters directly across the lake from the Legislature. We can then gaze in awe and respect as corporate power deigns to give attention to the governance of its realm.

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