

Winnipeg Free Press - PRINT EDITION

Civic Centre campus crumbling

Parkade closure adds to city's growing infrastructure woes

By: **Bartley Kives**

Posted: 1:00 AM | Comments: 0 (including replies)g



COLE BREILAND / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS [Enlarge Image](#)

Support bars have been installed at the Civic Centre Parkade, which was closed on Friday on the recommendation of engineers.

When city councillors return from their summer break, they won't be able to avoid multiple reminders of the severity of Winnipeg's infrastructure crisis -- no matter what route they take.

Across King Street from city hall is a Civic Centre campus where every structure is literally falling apart.

The Civic Centre Parkade, suddenly shuttered Friday evening due to structural-integrity concerns, is



[Enlarge Image](#)

Winnipeg Parking Authority chief operating officer Randy Topolniski addresses the media about the parkade on Monday. (COLE BREILAND / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)

CIVIC CENTRE PARKADE

- Built: 1966
- Number of stalls: 450
- Projected cost, in 2010, of conducting waterproofing and concrete work to repair the building: \$6.2 million
- Money set aside that year to conduct those renovations: \$2 million, held in reserve
- Projected cost, in 2011, of extending the life of the parkade 15 years: \$11.3 million
- Council-approved funds for a five-year fix, starting in 2011: \$606,000
- Amount of that money spent before the parkade was shuttered on Aug. 24 due to structural-integrity concerns: Approximately \$150,000
- sources: *Winnipeg Parking Authority, Crosier Kilgour & Partners*

waterproofing and concrete work.

But a parkade inspection by structural engineering firm Crosier Kilgour & Partners pegged the cost of a long-term renovation at \$11.3 million. Such a job would only extend the life of the parkade by 15 years, the engineers said.

surrounded by metal barricades. Mayor Sam Katz, city councillors and senior city administrators have lost their parking spots to the threat of falling concrete. The Winnipeg Police Service has been forced to park some of its vehicles on the western stretch of James Avenue, which has become a temporary surface lot.

Below King Street, the westernmost section of the tunnel connecting city hall to the Public Safety Building is now closed, severing a link in the city's weather-protected walkway system.

And the Public Safety Building, whose Tyndall-stone facade is crumbling, is surrounded by a wooden walkway that prevents pedestrians from being struck on the noggin by 450-million-year-old chunks of rock.

"The city has mismanaged its civic campus," said Point Douglas Coun. Mike Pagtakhan, whose ward includes the Civic Centre complex. Like all motorists with a parking spot at the Civic Centre Parkade, he's been offered a temporary spot at the Millennium Library Parkade.

But Pagtakhan is going to walk to work instead, as he lives closer to city hall than he does to the city's main library. On his way to the office, he'll see the scaffolding and wire fencing every day.

"I can't believe no one saw this coming. At the end of the day, it's a bit depressing," said Pagtakhan. "I don't think we have a good grasp of the situation."

Like Winnipeg's overall infrastructure deficit, which is estimated in the billions, the problems facing the Civic Centre complex have proven difficult for city hall to service.

The 47-year-old Public Safety Building will be vacated in 2014, when the police move into their new, \$193-million headquarters on Graham Avenue, in a renovated Canada Post building. The city chose to build new police headquarters instead of repairing the PSB when the cost of the repairs jumped to more than \$40 million from \$19 million in three years.

The city faces a similar decision with the 46-year-old Civic Centre Parkade, which up until 2010 was earmarked for \$6.2 million worth of repairs. In 2011, council voted to reserve \$2 million from the sale of the Winnipeg Square Parkade for

So in early 2011, the Winnipeg Parking Authority asked council for \$606,000 to conduct emergency concrete and shoring work to allow the parkade to last another five years, or at least as long as the police service would need to use the Public Safety Building.

Although council didn't approve the funds until this year, the emergency work began ahead of schedule in 2011, according to St. James Coun. Scott Fielding, who chairs council's alternate service delivery committee, which in turn oversees the Winnipeg Parking Authority.

The city sunk approximately \$130,000 into the crumbling parkade last year and planned to spend another \$90,000 this year before another inspection led to the structure being closed on Friday, Fielding said.

Engineers were surprised to see how badly the parkade had deteriorated and recommended it be closed, said Randy Topolniski, the WPA's chief operating officer.

It's unknown when the parkade will reopen, he said. It's also possible it will be razed after police move out of the Civic Centre campus.

"We all know what's happening in 2014. The police are moving out of the building so the decision has to be made whether we decommission this thing," Fielding said. "There was a lot of talk about this during the (2012) budget process. I asked a lot of questions myself: I had a bar supporting the ceiling over my car."

The Winnipeg Parking Authority is in the process of moving motorists with passes at the Civic Centre Parkade into other facilities, including privately owned lots and parkades.

Other organizations are also scrambling. The Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, which holds approximately 60 concerts every season at the Centennial Concert Hall -- connected to the parkade by a tunnel up until last week -- is preparing to contact its subscribers, said marketing director Susana Schanel.

It will be a while before another parkade will rise in the Exchange District to pick up the slack. A new structure planned for James Avenue, east of the concert hall, will take 12 to 18 months to build, said Ross McGowan, president and CEO of downtown development agency CentreVenture.

bartley.kives@freepress.mb.ca

< b

Find this article at:

<http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/civic-centre-campus-crumbling-167653405.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

