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Committee awards contract for design of Pictou library

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PICTOU – The next chapter towards the construction of a new library in Pictou is complete.

The Pictou Public Library Project Committee has awarded the contract for the first design phase for the new library (to be joined with the current deCoste Centre) to Archibald and Fraser Architects Limited.

Archibald and Fraser Architects Ltd., based in Antigonish County, was the lead firm for the Antigonish Town and County Library – popularly called The People's Place.

The firm has an extensive portfolio, having designed many public buildings across northern Nova Scotia and in the waterfront area of Pictou. The proposals received by the committee were impressive, but after careful consideration the decision was made keeping key factors, like energy sustainability and community collaboration, in mind.

The committee, which will guide the project through this first phase, has representation from the Town of Pictou, the Municipality of the County of Pictou, the deCoste Centre, and the Regional Library Board.

The first step will be an onsite assessment of the deCoste Centre to explore options for locating a library on the property. This will be followed by public consultations to gather ideas from the general public and county and town groups, led by regional library staff and lead architect Dale Archibald. There will also be opportunities for input via the web and social media. Information gathered from all of these key stakeholders in various ways, in combination with the expertise of the architects, deCoste Centre and Regional Library staff, will factor into schematic design along with detailed costs for construction.

Eric Stackhouse, chief librarian for the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library, said there has already been a lot of public interest around the project with people sending in notes through email and social media.   He said committee has received a model of what the new library should look like from one person in the community.

In addition to general public sessions and talks with special interest groups, Stackhouse said he would be open to visiting other groups who want to hear about the project.

"I think that as more technology is going on, more and more people want public spaces to gather, to meet and to learn," he said. "Traditional places such as the churches are struggling and schools have practically taken themselves out of the market so they are looking for places that are free and open to everyone and the public library is meeting that bill."

The funding for this project has been provided by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), Nova Scotia Communities, Culture, and Heritage (CCH), the Municipality of the County of Pictou, the Town of Pictou, and local communities.

"Like other new library projects around the province, this can really act as a catalyst for growth in the Town of Pictou and the surrounding area. Public libraries today are vibrant community gathering and learning spaces and we have the benefit of partnering with the deCoste, a tremendously successful performance theatre. It's a winning combination," said Cam Beaton, committee chair and Pictou town councillor.

Updates and information about the library project will be provided on the Pictou-Antigonish regional library site at www.parl.ns.ca/pictou