

In the CBC news report “ [Saskatoon OKs art gallery plan](#) ” (Tuesday, December 1, 2009), Beverley Caldwell, a longtime volunteer of the Mendel Art Gallery said of the city of Saskatoon’s decision to abandon the existing building: “A lot of the people around the Mendel are very upset by it. I think that you will see the end of the present volunteer program because it’s not true to the nature of the Mendel.”

Indeed, in 2005, the gallery’s volunteers made it perfectly clear about their position on the subject of closing the Mendel Art Gallery. Volunteers Hazel Macza, Alison Lawlor, and Bev Caldwell, on behalf of all of the Mendel volunteers issued a public statement: “The legacy of Fred Mendel and the gallery’s history are attached to our facility, and integral to our public and cultural identity. . . . We have more than 100 volunteers who are an essential part of the gallery operation, and commit time and energy throughout the year for various programs, events and fundraisers. If the gallery moves to the River Landing site, the volunteers would not feel the same allegiance they do to the current location.”

Some Mendel volunteers have issued their own individual statements, like Michael Klassen, who states: “The building that houses the Mendel was designed and intended for its permanent use as a civic art gallery. Perhaps council should consider that future benefactors may reconsider donating buildings or large amounts of time and money to a city that would think so little of destroying such a wonderful legacy given its citizens.”

And in a letter to the editor of the StarPhoenix “ [Mendel lost a volunteer](#) ” (April 20, 2009), Mendel volunteer Doris Bietenholz states: “ It cannot be taken for granted that all volunteers happily will transfer their support to the new gallery, which is not even called The Mendel. This proposed new gallery is not only a travesty, but it is treason to the trust, intention and generosity of the founder and his family. Moreover, I take issue with the undemocratic manner in which this decision was taken behind closed doors. There was no public consultation and citizens were left in the dark until the very day to prevent opposition. . . . I now know that if the doors to this kidnapped institution are ever to open, this volunteer will never darken its doors. I will not be the only one.”