Rosalyn Jones-Smith, Charleswood Dog Park Club

I am here to speak as someone who has first hand experience with most of the off-leash areas in Winnipeg. I have enjoyed the parks since the first off-leash areas were designated 20 years ago and depending on the dog, the season, the weather, I have used all the different parks for different reasons. Now I am retired and this is my recreation.

I got involved with the Dog Park Advocate groups when I joined Maple Grove in 2010, then

helped start WINDOG in 2012, started BLDP in 2014, chaired Maple Grove in

2016 and am now Past-President there, as well as organizer for Charleswood Dog Park Club.

I haved used Charleswood off-leash park since it was designated in 2002. I

live at Osborne and Jubilee, so since Brenda Leipsic park was closed,

Charleswood and Maple Grove became my next closest as both are a 15 minute drive for me.

We all know the benefits of parks. Most people who use dog parks are laid back, easy going people who just want a place where they can walk in nature, with their dog. The parks become a community. People feel safer in a community. Anyone with hearing or seeing or mobility issues has a hard time walking their dog on the on the sidewalk and many feel more comfortable in an off-leash Park.

These communities promote responsible pet ownership ~ we help promote licensing, we support each other if there are

issues with aggressive dogs, we encourage cleaning up after your dog, we hold clean up days to make sure our park is a safe happy place.

I don't think any other parks in the City are used as often as our

off-leash dog parks. Charleswood off-leash is a 20 acre Recreation area that is in use 365 days a year, 12 hours a day. With minimal maintenance, some grass cutting in summer, zero path

clearing/shovelling in winter and garbage pick up year round the park provides a safe recreation for a wide spectrum of people. People come to this park from not just Charleswood but

Lindenwoods, St. James, River Heights, as it is also the only safe off-leash area on the entire West side of the City. The heavy use of the park is not easily visible in the summer, but in the winter every inch of snow on that 20 acres in packed down by the park users and their dogs. The people are of every income, every age and every profession. We like to say the dog park is the Great leveller - it doesn't matter who your are, we are all just our dogs drivers and janitors.

If you replaced the reason for our recreation, with another (swap out the dog for a bike or a skateboard or a baseball) then "dogparking" would probably be the most popular sport in Winnipeg.

For 16 years Charleswood Dog Park has been used by dog owners who just want a place to

go for a walk with our dog off-leash. We clean up after ourselves, ask for very little and when the little that we ask for doesn't happen, we have

replaced it ourselves. We are pretty easy going people who make do, but as a Winnipegger I have to admit that the state of some of our parks is embarrassing. I know the Park Strategy is reviewing the current use of Recreation areas ~ I would like you to recognize that activity is also deserving of space that is specific to our recreation. It is not just about the dogs. It is about updating the way we use our greenspace. Giving off-leash users a place that is exclusively for their use also benefits the City. Maple Grove has accessed $50,000 in grants to add amenities like a fence, parking lot and in ground garbage bins.

Charleswood is the only off-leash dog park in the southwest corner of Winnipeg. The Fields for Fido site describes it as "Former golf course.This is a multi-use park, other users include: skiers,

snowshoe enthusiasts, walkers, runners, cyclists." Because of its current location we don't often have concerns about sharing Charleswood Dog. The only issues this park has would be the dogs running to greet or check out the kids who cut through the park from school on one side to get to McDonalds on the other side, and that is managed

through education. However, when the planned construction does make it to the top of the projects list and the road come through the park, it would be lovely to have a well planned replacement. I am thrilled to have the report confirm that we need more dog parks.