Dear Mayor and Councillors on EPC,

We are unable to attend the budget hearing as delegate #80 at EPC today. The OURS-Winnipeg presentation re Golf Services is attached for your convenience (and posted on CCDMIS, March 18, 2020 EPC Agenda).

We have made the decision to cancel our in person presentation today due to our special circumstances that exceeded the commonly accepted guidelines for COVID-19 social distancing. Ron had eye surgery yesterday and Pam's daughter is expecting a baby in the next couple of weeks and any risk of exposure cannot be taken at this time.

We regret that we are unable to present in person and therefore unavailable for questions from EPC members.

We remain available by phone or email for any questions to the OURS-Winnipeg presentation at your convenience.

Summary of Requests by OURS-Winnipeg re Transformative Fund and Re-purposing golf course lands:

1. **OURS-Winnipeg requests that the residential development option be removed from the repurpose proposal for golf lands prior to the budget submission to council.**

2. **OURS-Winnipeg requests that the proposed re-purposing of city golf lands be halted until a master plan for greenspace in Winnipeg is completed.**

3. **OURS-Winnipeg requests that any decisions regarding repurposing of the golf courses are put on hold until the golf course lands are integrated into the Climate Action Plan with key directions and short and medium term actions.**

Sincerely,

Pam Lucenkiw

Ron Mazur

Co-Chairs

OURS-Winnipeg

OURS-Winnipeg

Outdoor Urban Recreational Spaces – Winnipeg

March 18, 2020

Presentation by:

OURS-Winnipeg Co-Chairs

Ron Mazur and Pam Lucenkiw

To: City of Winnipeg Executive Policy Committee

Re: Standing Policy Committee on Innovation and Economic Development - Golf Services

OURS-Winnipeg (Outdoor Urban Recreational Spaces – Winnipeg) is a city-wide, community-based, greenspace advocate organization with a focus on urban greenspaces, river and nature corridors and the urban forest. Parks, green spaces (including golf courses) and natural areas are essential to making Winnipeg an attractive place to live, work and visit. The city's 12 publicly owned golf courses are zoned parkland, and comprise about 12% of city-owned greenspace.

The City of Winnipeg needs to develop a Master Plan for Greenspace that reflects the cultural, economic, environmental and ecological value of our natural assets.

OURS-Winnipeg originated in December, 2011 in response to a plan by the City of Winnipeg to sell or lease seven of the city-owned golf courses for commercial or residential development. OURS-Winnipeg led a successful public campaign to have the City's request for Expressions of Interest withdrawn in 2012. The 2011 plan to sell city golf courses was championed by then Mayor Sam Katz.

Today, we see the Sam Katz plan to sell city golf course lands revived as part of the proposed Transformative Fund in the 2020 City Budget.

The City's plan for a Transformative Fund includes repurposing of up to 30% of city golf lands.

Transformative Fund and Repurposing Golf Lands (park zoned lands) proposal allows for:

- acquiring funding from the sale of golf lands
- residential development on golf lands
- repurposing up to 30% of all golf lands
- proceeds of fund to reduce City's infrastructure deficit
- "reinvestment" of capital assets (golf land) into services and deficit reduction

We question how the amount of 30% of golf lands available for repurposing was determined.

Citizens expect evidence based policy decisions and the 30% of golf lands is not validated by evidence.

Winnipeg Golf Services has had a balanced budget for the last several years and now the City is proposing to sell some of its publicly owned golf lands for residential development.

Note that the Golf Services Special Operating Agency has a balanced budget and forecasts a balanced budget for the multi-year budget 2020 - 2024.

- Golf lands provide year round recreation opportunities, both formal and informal.
- Golf lands provide year round services to the environment - climate change mitigation and resilience, storm water retention and heat absorption in summer, habitat, natural areas for birds
- More parkland (not less) will be needed to accommodate increased population density in infill areas where golf courses are mostly located

The "Transformative Fund" being proposed by the City in the Preliminary Capital and Operating Budget 2020 will allow up to 30% of golf lands to be repurposed. The Transformative Fund may acquire funding from the sale of golf lands.

Residential development is presented as an option for the golf lands.

OURS-WINNIPEG REQUESTS THAT THE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OPTION BE REMOVED FROM THE REPURPOSE PROPOSAL FOR GOLF LANDS PRIOR TO THE BUDGET SUBMISSION TO COUNCIL.

ONCE GOLF LANDS/PARKLANDS ARE SOLD FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, THEY WILL NEVER BE GREEN SPACE AGAIN. ONCE THEY ARE GONE,

THEY ARE GONE FOREVER.

The other repurpose options proposed for the golf lands can be reversed to green space in the future.

From 2002 until 2014 the golf courses were losing money due to a business model which took money from the golf courses for general revenue.

Since 2014 that has been remedied and the golf courses have steadily improved to where they are now increasing rounds and breaking even.

It is cost effective for the city to retain and operate golf courses because they create revenue from operations and also from taxes and leases that go in to the city's general revenue. The golf lands pay their own costs plus generate property tax revenue. Lease terms can be re-negotiated.

The golf lands provide year round recreation opportunities, climate change mitigation and resilience services.

The city is forecasting growth to a million people and infill densification. More parkland, greenspace and natural areas will be needed in the mature areas, exactly where the golf courses are located.

Golf courses are used by the public in all seasons and are viewed as neighbourhood parks. Golfing in the summer and cross-country skiing in the winter on city-owned golf lands provide recreational opportunities near where people reside.

City-owned golf courses are zoned park land and make up 12% of city parkland. Once this land is developed it will never again return to parkland, wetland, prairie or forest.

Cities need forward-thinking Masterplans to help priorize action to meet growing populations and density. The absence of a Master Plan for Greenspace in Winnipeg has left the door open for ad hoc political decision making and missed opportunists.

OURS-WINNIPEG REQUESTS THAT THE PROPOSED RE-PURPOSING OF CITY GOLF LANDS BE HALTED UNTIL A MASTER PLAN FOR GREENSPACE IN WINNIPEG IS COMPLETED.

Climate Change, Biodiversity, Natural Solutions

The golf course lands provide multiple levels of benefits beyond the bottom line of Golf Services. For residents and wildlife the golf courses are a precious resource. Golf course lands contribute to climate change resilience and biodiversity. The golf courses can save us money by providing ecosystem services, particularly stormwater retention, flood reduction and heat absorption on hot summer days.

1. The "Transformative Fund" and repurposing of "30% of golf course lands" initiatives provide an opportune time to include golf courses in the City's Climate Action Plan.

Strategic Opportunity #7	
Community Climate Resiliency	
Description	Climate resilience is the integration of climate mitigation and climate adaptation. Communities are facing serious threats related to public health, infrastructure costs, economic viability, and social equity associated with climate change. During the public consultation for this Plan, numerous participants identified the important connection between climate adaptation and mitigation. They expressed a clear desire for the City to take a holistic approach to climate action that considers multiple co-benefits between adaptation and mitigation. Opportunities for additional climate resilience actions need to be considered in a formal Climate Adaptation Strategy.
Key Directions	7.1 Implement Opportunities to Improve Winnipeg's Resilience and Adaptability to the Effects of a Changing Climate (Primary Responsibility: Office of Sustainability) 7.2 Increase and Preserve Tree Canopy (Primary Responsibility: Public Works Department) 7.3 Preserve and Manage Parks and Natural Areas to Support Climate Change Mitigation (Primary Responsibility: Public Works Department)

[i]

During public consultation participants "expressed a clear desire for the City to take a holistic approach to climate action that considers multiple co-benefits between adaptions and mitigations. Opportunities for additional climate resilience actions need to be considered in a formal Climate Action Strategy."

The City of Winnipeg Climate Action Plan Summary of October 2019 contains key directions for greenspace

KEY DIRECTIONS & ACTIONS Strategic Opportunity #7
- Increase and preserve tree canopy
- Preserve and manage parks and natural areas to support climate change mitigation[ii]

An update was presented at the City of Winnipeg Council Meeting, January 30, 2020 identifying climate resiliency measures that involve greenspace
Strategic Opportunity #7
- **Urban Forest Strategy** – In 2019, the contract was awarded to assist the Public Works Department with the development a long term vision and strategy for sustaining Winnipeg's urban forest. 11
- The **Recreation & Parks Strategies** project is ongoing and will be complete in 2020. Current efforts and future opportunities to mitigate and adapt to climate risks over the next 25 years will be included.
- **One Million Trees Challenge** - In September 2019, Mayor Bowman announced the Challenge aiming to plant one million trees before the City's population reaches one million people.[iii]

- **1200 acres of golf course lands** are NOT included in the Climate Action Plan Strategic Opportunity #7 – although they are capital assets and are large parks which contain high quality natural habitat, contribute to ecological services, biodiversity and recreation.

- (Note: Golf Courses are included in Strategic Opportunity #1-electric vehicles and building efficiencies)**.**

  Our neighbour, the City of Selkirk won an award for its holistic approach to using the principles of asset management to integrate its Climate Change Adaptation Strategy into day-to-day city operations.[iv]..
  The award won in 2019 came from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, representing over 2000 Canadian municipalities.

> *"Be it the city's heating and cooling budget, urban tree conservation or purchasing new vehicles, the **default setting for day-to-day municipal business has to be adaptive from now on**".* [v]

OURS-WINNIPEG REQUESTS THAT ANY DECISIONS REGARDING REPURPOSING OF THE GOLF COURSES ARE PUT ON HOLD UNTIL THE GOLF COURSE LANDS ARE INTEGRATED INTO THE CLIMATE ACTION PLAN WITH KEY DIRECTIONS AND SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS.

2. Greenspace can provide cost effective, natural climate adaptions

Winnipeg has exceptional access to local resources of the Prairie Climate Centre and International Institute for Sustainable development.

According to the Prairie Climate Centre in reports prepared for Edmonton and Calgary "Increasing green spaces and green infrastructure addresses multiple challenges and offers multiple benefits. They often turn out to be more economically viable, even under prevailing economic models."[vi] Parks are critical infrastructure. They can be designed to act like sponges, **holding water during rain events and slowly filtering stormwater after the event has passed.** Cities are using that natural capacity as green infrastructure to **complement the traditional alternative of building and maintaining large underground networks of pipes and tunnels**. Parks do this while improving air quality, reducing the heat-island effect and creating close-to-home opportunities for outdoor recreation and experiences with nature.

Last year, the U.S. Conference of Mayors adopted a park infrastructure resolution that urges Congress to **include city parks in any infrastructure packages** it considers..[vii]

Nature Conservancy's report "Beyond the Source" tells us that by restoring forests and improving land management practices, water quality can be improved and water treatment costs reduced. **For roughly half of all cities, nature-based activities can be implemented for as little as US$2 per person annually**. In order to realize the full value of natural infrastructure, we need to move beyond a "one activity for one purpose" mindset. By "stacking" the benefits that each conservation activity provides, the financial case is strong for investing in natural solutions alongside gray infrastructure." In fact, **one in six cities could recoup the costs through savings in annual water treatment costs alone**".[viii]

3. Canadian cities are adding to their green space and natural areas
Below are a few examples of Canadian Cities that are acquiring new park, expanding parks and green corridors and thinking of it in holistic ways that include biodiversity, climate resilience, golf courses, recreation and the image of their city.

- **Calgary** joined **Local Action for Biodiversity in 2016**, an **international** program to improve biodiversity planning and management alongside **Montreal** and **Edmonton**.[ix]
- **Edmonton**'s river valley comprises over 20 major parks and attractions and forms the largest expanse of urban parkland in Canada.[1][2] **Golf courses and the park system become a winter recreation area during that season**.
- **Halifax** has a **Green Network Plan** and is currently partnering with Nature Conservancy to **purchase 380 acres of land for an urban wilderness park**.x The Halifax Green Network Plan (HGNP) defines an interconnected open space system for the municipality, **highlights ecosystem functions** and benefits, and outlines strategies to manage open space.
- Wild, connected and diverse, is the urban ecosystem in **Toronto.** It contributes to **mitigating climate change** in Canada's largest city. Toronto's **natural spaces** in the ravines and waterfront make up 17% of Toronto's land base. These together with an extensive system of parks and open spaces, tableland forests, street trees, back yards and even green roofs give **Toronto its identify as a city within a park**.xi Rouge Park in Toronto is Canada's first urban National Park and it noted for its biodiversity.
- The **Victoria** Capitol Region District has embraced the **philosophy that Nature Needs Half** (www.natureneedshalf.com) in planning an interconnected regional parks system**. It has spent $48 million to protect 11,082 acres**.
- In 2019 **Montreal** Mayor Valerie Plante proposed a **3,000-hectare** "Great West Park". The park, which will consolidate five existing parks and green spaces, will be a boon in the **fight against climate change**. "It takes a lot of courage because we all rely on the taxes coming from building houses and condos, which, to me, is not the right way to go," said Plante. " "It means that right now Montreal can place itself among the cities of the world that **value biodiversity**"[xii]

Canadian City Parks Report 2019 - Key Indicators[xiii]

23 Canadian Cities participated in the report, Winnipeg was not among them

- 48% of cities have a city-wide green infrastructure plan that includes parks
- 87% of cities offer natural stewardship programs
- 83% of cities have a biodiversity strategy

Per cent of parkland that is natural (The Canadian City Parks Report 2019)[xiv]

4. Ecological Management of Golf Courses
The *Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses* provides a program for the ecological management of golf courses. Calgary has six Audubon certified golf courses. There is one certified golf

course in Winnipeg and 82 across Canada. Clear Lake Golf Course in Manitoba has a clause in its 25-year contract requiring it to be operated organically. As leases on golf lands are renewed it is an opportunity for the City to show commitment to improving the environment and reaping the benefits of a healthier ecosystem.

Conclusion

The golf courses are large parks which contain high quality natural habitat, contribute to ecological services, health benefits, biodiversity and recreation. It is in all of our best interests that the City of Winnipeg ensures that greenspace is preserved and enhanced for future generations as the city's population grows and demand for their use increases. The option of development on city-owned golf courses must be removed.

A master plan for greenspace with an ecological basis must be made for the golf course lands. In the meantime, the city will continue to earn revenue from the golf courses and recreation will occur. The worst case scenario would be to use an ad hoc approach and whittle away at this green space one piece at a time without a holistic vision and plan.

Quote from the City of Winnipeg's Climate Action Summary, October 2019

"The City must take a leadership role to create momentum for broad uptake of climate adaption and resilience in the community and in the region. It must demonstrate commitment to climate action.[xv]"

Summary of Requests

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[i] Winnipeg's Climate Action Plan May 2018 Page 8
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[ii] Winnipeg Climate Action Summary October 2019 Page 16
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[iii] January 30, 2020 Council Regular Meeting Agenda, – Standing Policy Committee on Water and Waste, Riverbank Management and the Environment – January 9, 2020 Item 1.
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[vi] Prairie Climate Centre, Building a Climate-Resilient City: Urban ecosystems Page 1
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[xi] Wild Connected and Diverse Oct 2018 https://www.daniels.utoronto.ca/events/2018/10/23/wild-connected-diverse-toronto-biodiversity-panel?fbclid=IwAR0YwAdrZsM4hj1lZrsqJbUd7AXKBwD6Wa9x92oUee6d28GmyNs9WnPdark
[xii]Montreal plans to create the biggest urban park in the country, August 8 https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/montreal-plans-to-create-the-biggest-urban-park-in-the-country-1.4541616
[xiii] Canadian Park City Report Page 12
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[xiv] Canadian Parks City Report 2019 Page 16https://cityparksreport.parkpeople.ca/downloads/pp_canadiancityparksreport_2019_web.pdf
[xv] Winnipeg Climate Acton Summary October 2019 Page 14
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