

To the esteemed City Hall Councillors of Winnipeg,

We stand before you today not just as residents, but as members of a community deeply connected to the land we call home. We implore you to consider the profound emotional weight of the ongoing situation at Lemay Forest and choose a path guided by compassion and a commitment to our shared values.

The story of Lemay Forest is not simply one of a proposed development on a privately owned lot. It is a story woven with threads of ecological significance, historical importance, and the enduring spirit of our community. This forest, one of our city's last intact riparian areas, is a sanctuary for wildlife and a vital green space that contributes to the air we breathe. To disturb it would be to lose a piece of Winnipeg's natural heart.

Beyond its ecological value, Lemay Forest holds a history resonating deeply within our community, particularly for the Métis people. This land, once part of the traditional river lot system, witnessed the very foundations of our province. Adjacent to it stood the Asile Ritchot orphanage, a place where hundreds of vulnerable children, including a significant number of Métis children, tragically lost their lives. The belief that many of these children lie in unmarked graves within Lemay Forest casts a solemn shadow over this land, demanding our respect and remembrance.

Development on this site disregards this profound history and the potential resting place of these children. It would be a decision that echoes the painful legacy of the past and undermines our commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. The proposed development raises serious concerns about the violation of human rights, the trampling of Indigenous rights under UNDRIP, and a stark disregard for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, particularly those concerning the commemoration and protection of burial sites [17, 22, 16, 21, 19, 8, 2, 33, 24, 27, 34, 13, 36, 37, 38, 39, 20, 29, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 41, 64, 70]. Furthermore, proceeding with this development could be seen as a deep offense to the treaties and the ongoing journey of reconciliation with the Métis Nation.

The community has spoken with a unified voice, forming the Coalition to Save Lemay Forest to advocate for this cherished space. Their efforts, born from a deep love for this land, reflect the collective desire to protect it for future generations.

We understand the complexities of this decision, the considerations of private property rights, and the need for development within our city. However, in this unique case, the emotional and ethical imperatives for preservation far outweigh the purely economic interests.

Therefore, we respectfully and earnestly plead with you, our City Hall Councillors, to choose a

path that honors the profound significance of Lemay Forest. We urge you to vote in favor of expropriation, embrace the opportunity to protect this vital green space, acknowledge its sensitive history, and demonstrate your commitment to reconciliation and the well-being of our entire community. Let your decision reflect the heart and soul of Winnipeg, a city that values its natural heritage and people above all else.