

Submission – Nicole Desautels

Expropriation and Rezoning of Lemay Forest (Item 1 - Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development – Notice of Motion)

Submitted: Tue, 03/25/2025 - 16:38

Delegation information

Committee you want to address
Council

Agenda item you want to address (number and title)
Item No. 1 Expropriation and Rezoning of Lemay Forest

Support or oppose recommendations
I support the recommendations

Submit comments in writing

The Lemay Forest holds deep historical and cultural significance, particularly for Indigenous communities. It is not just a green space—it is sacred ground, intertwined with the histories of Indigenous peoples ancestors, the legacy of colonial violence, and the responsibility of truth and reconciliation. The calls to expropriate, rezone and protect this land are about more than conservation; they are about respecting burial sites, upholding Indigenous rights, and preventing further erasure of our history. The Lemay Forest is the location of the abandoned Asile Cemetery of unmarked graves. Anecdotal stories suggest unmarked graves also exist outside the formal boundaries of the Asile Cemetery, between 1904 and 1948, 3383 children have died at the orphanage. The whole forest should remain intact out of respect for their graves, and because of The Cemeteries Act in Manitoba. The developers' plans for the property were rejected by the city. Despite this, the developer is choosing to cut the trees down, and we need that to stop. Several levels of government have submitted a generous offer to purchase the property in order to make it into a public park. The developer and owner ignored a federal wildlife officer's request for a pileated woodpecker cavity sweep ahead of tree cutting, thus seemingly not adhering to Federal species regulation. In media interviews, the developer seemingly dismissed the need to comply with Federal species law and dismissed efforts by all levels of government to preserve this forest. The City of Winnipeg and the province of Manitoba must designate the Lemay Forest as a heritage site to begin the process of making it a protected public park. The Lemay Forest has been used by First Nations and Metis people for ceremony for years. The forest should be preserved and ceremony must be allowed to continue. The City of Winnipeg, the province of Manitoba and the federal government have all formally signed on to international goals for preserving biodiversity. We're required to protect 30 per cent of the lands and waters by 2030. Protecting Lemay Forest is part of our international commitment.

Public engagement (optional)

I consent to being contacted to participate in potential public engagement related to this matter.

No