Written Submission — Tree Bylaw Delegation

Standing Policy Committee on Community Services
December 2, 2025
Submitted by: Diane Bousquet

Good morning,

My name is **Diane Bousquet.** I live here in Winnipeg, I'm a mother, a community advocate, and a Métis woman with ancestral ties to this region long before it became the city we know today.

Over the last several years, I've been involved in protecting natural spaces — including Lemay Forest. Through that experience, I've learned just how quickly trees, green spaces, and ecosystems can be lost when there are no clear protections, no consistent process, and no accountability woven into policy.

That is why I support the **Public and Private Tree Bylaw.**

Not because trees are sentimental — but because they are essential.

🌿 Why This Bylaw Is Needed

Trees are not passive background scenery. They actively support the health and resilience of this city.

They:

- Clean the air and cool neighbourhoods
- Reduce environmental and municipal infrastructure strain
- Provide habitat for wildlife
- Improve physical and mental health
- Strengthen community connection and identity

These benefits take decades to grow, but can disappear in a single decision.

Right now, the protection of our tree canopy relies too heavily on advocacy, conflict, reaction, and public mobilization after harm has already occurred. That is not effective stewardship — that is damage control.

A strong bylaw creates clarity at the start, rather than conflict at the end.

Indigenous and Community Perspective

As a Métis woman, I was raised with the understanding that the land is not something we own — it is something we are responsible to.

Trees are living archives.
They hold memory, shade, medicine, and silence where people can breathe.

In many Indigenous teachings, we do not make decisions based only on the present moment — we consider how choices ripple forward seven generations.

This bylaw moves us closer to that kind of thinking.

It acknowledges that trees are more than commodities — they are relationships. And when the land is respected, the people who live upon it feel respected too.

A Preventive Approach

We often say prevention is better than reaction.

This bylaw has the ability to:

- reduce public conflict
- prevent escalations between communities and industry
- protect culturally significant sites before harm occurs
- remove guesswork and inconsistency for both developers and residents
- create a clear process everyone can rely on

If we build fairness and transparency at the first point of contact, we avoid the mistrust, frustration, and escalation that come when communities feel decisions are made without them.

This is not just environmental policy — it is **harm reduction.**

Recommendations

As you finalize this bylaw, I respectfully suggest:

- **Strong enforcement** so tree loss is not simply a cost absorbed by industry.
- **Replacement standards based on ecological value, not convenience.**
- **Public transparency**, so residents don't learn about removal only after a stump appears.
- **Meaningful Indigenous involvement**, not as symbolism, but as part of decision-making where land holds cultural, historical, or spiritual significance.

Closing

Winnipeg is at a crossroads.

We can continue allowing our canopy to shrink and our ecosystems to erode — or we can choose a future where development and environmental responsibility coexist.

This bylaw won't solve every challenge — but it will change the starting point.
It will make protection the default, not the exception.

And perhaps most importantly:

It will prevent loss before the community has to defend what remains.

Thank you for your time, your work, and your willingness to create policy that reflects respect — not only for today, but for generations still coming.

Respectfully,
Diane Bousquet
Winnipeg, MB