Submitted: Wed, 12/03/2025 - 15:46

Delegation information

Committee you want to address
Executive Policy Committee

Agenda item you want to address (number and title)
Tree bylaw

Support or oppose recommendations
I support the recommendations

Register as a delegation_checkbox
Register as a delegation

Register as a delegation
In person

Submit comments in writing checkbox
Submit comments in writing

Comments
Dear Mayor Gillingham and Members of EPC,
My name is Diane Bousquet, a Métis woman, Bear Clan, and someone who has spent years protecting places like Lemay Forest, where trees are more than scenery — they are history, medicine, and memory. I am writing in strong support of the motion to begin public engagement on protecting private-land trees adjacent to our streets.
Winnipeg is losing thousands of mature trees every year on private land, silently and without record. These losses are irreversible. They hollow out our neighbourhoods, remove shade during extreme heat, and take away living witnesses who held generations before us. I have stood beside these stumps. I have prayed in the places where canopy used to protect us. I know what it feels like when a community loses a tree it cannot replace in a lifetime.
More than 80–90% of our entire canopy is on private property. Without protecting these trees, we cannot meet our climate goals, our safety needs, or our promises to future generations. Other cities have already stepped forward. Winnipeg cannot keep falling behind.
This motion is simply the first step: to listen. To let Winnipeggers speak to the value of the trees that shelter us, cool us, and hold our stories. I urge you to vote yes and allow this conversation to begin.
Thank you for your time and for considering what is at stake.
Sincerely,

Diane Bousquet
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Submission for a committee of council
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Public engagement (optional)

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

Personal information

First name
Diane

Last name
Bousquet

Tree Bylaw Motion – Executive Policy Committee
Presented by: Diane Bousquet (Métis – Bear Clan)

Good morning, Mayor Gillingham and members of EPC.

My name is **Diane Bousquet**. I am a Métis woman, Bear Clan, a mother, and someone who has spent years protecting places like **Lemay Forest** — a place of cultural memory, ceremony, and healing. The land has been my teacher, and the trees have been my witnesses.

I want to speak to you today not just about policy, but about **what is being lost**, and what will continue to be lost if we don't act now.

The Weight of What We're Losing

Every year, Winnipeg quietly loses thousands of mature trees on private land.
These losses are not counted.
They are not seen.
They simply disappear.

But I have stood beside the stumps.
I have smudged in places where elders — the trees — once stood tall.
And I can tell you that when a mature tree is cut down, the land remembers.
The community feels it.
And our city becomes just a little bit more vulnerable.

Mature trees are not replaceable in our lifetime.
You cannot plant your way out of what is being lost.
And you cannot prune your way out of it either.
Protection is the only path that honours what already exists.

Why This Motion Matters

Eighty to ninety percent of Winnipeg's entire canopy — **the very forest that keeps this city alive** — is on private land. That's where most of our shade comes from. That's where our cooling happens. That's where the real climate resilience exists.

When those trees fall, the city loses the majority of its natural defences against extreme heat, flooding, and declining air quality.

And we all know what is coming — hotter summers, more heat waves, more strain on families, seniors, and vulnerable communities.

This motion is not the final bylaw.
It is simply the decision to **listen**.
To ask Winnipeggers what these trees mean to them.
To acknowledge openly that our losses are real and unsustainable.

To refuse this conversation is to pretend we don't already feel the heat rising.

Lemay Forest — A Testament of What We Protect

When I stood fasting outside MPPI this summer, and when I stood in Lemay Forest during ceremony, I learned something that I carry into every discussion about trees:

When we protect land, we protect people.
When we protect trees, we protect the stories that hold us together.

Lemay Forest taught me that trees are more than infrastructure —
they are living archives of who we were, who we are, and who we might become.

Every neighbourhood in Winnipeg has its own Lemay — a place where people gather, breathe, and remember they are part of something larger.

If we do not protect these trees now, there will be nothing left for our children to inherit but heat and regret.

Winnipeg Must Not Fall Behind

More than 20 Canadian cities already protect private trees.
Winnipeg is not being asked to lead —
we're being asked to *catch up*.

You — the members of this committee — have already shown boldness by funding planting and pruning. You have honoured two parts of the Trees Please Pledge.

This motion represents the third and most necessary part:
protecting what remains.

We have planted.
We have pruned.
Now we must protect.

The Ask

I am asking you to vote **in favour** of this motion —
to begin public engagement, to open the door, to let Winnipeggers speak.

Not just for today's city, but for the city that will exist long after we are gone.

A future generation will look back and ask:
"What did they do when they saw the canopy thinning?"

Let the answer be:
We chose to listen.
We chose to protect.
We chose to do what was right.

Thank you.
