Minutes – Executive Policy Committee – December 9, 2025

REPORTS

Item No. 13 Proactive Cleanup of Needle Debris and Weapons in City Parks

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE DECISION:

The Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and approved the following:

1. That this report be received as information.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Santos,

That the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service be concurred in.

Carried

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On November 18, 2025, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and granted an extension of time of 60 days to report back on the Proactive Cleanup of Dangerous Debris in City Parks.

COUNCIL DECISION:

On January 29, 2025, Council adopted the following:

1. That the following recommendations with respect to the 2025 Preliminary Operating Budget be approved by Council:

    F. That the Public Service be directed to provide an interim verbal report on the progress of the cleanups outlined in Recommendation "E" at the May 2025 and July 2025 meetings of the Executive Policy Committee and provide a written report back at the November, 2025 meeting of the Executive Policy Committee of the outcomes and how much dangerous debris was collected.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Proactive Cleanup of Needle Debris and Weapons in City Parks

Critical Path: Executive Policy Committee – Council

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
D. Domke	J. Berezowsky	T. Graham	J. Dunford

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2025, the Public Service established a proactive cleanup crew (the "crew") with two staff. The crew regularly visited 16 assigned sites within the Downtown area to monitor for and remove dangerous debris such as:

- Needles;
- Weapons; and,
- Drug paraphernalia.

Sites were visited on average two to three times per week, and total units collected were submitted on tracking sheets.

The crew removed 6,358 needles and 177 weapons from the assigned areas. Weapons were typically knives or sharpened implements. In addition, the crew collected 659 bags with remnants of drugs, 1,293 pipes, and/or other drug paraphernalia.

The program will continue each season, until 2028, serving the 16 assigned sites within the Downtown area.

There are six additional parks where the Public Service consistently finds high volumes of needles, weapons, and drug paraphernalia. If the program is expanded to add these locations in the future, the additional annual cost is estimated at $28,200. This includes an additional 0.5 FTE.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That this report be received as information.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

On January 29, 2025, Council directed the Public Service to provide a written report back at the November 2025 meeting of the outcomes and how many dangerous needles and other debris have been collected in 16 designated City parks.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no implications arising from receiving this report as information. The program is currently funded through to 2028 to visit 16 assigned sites within the Downtown area. It is estimated that it would cost $28,200 to add 6 additional sites to the program.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

On November 21, 2024, Council received as information the Public Service's report titled "Proactive Cleanup of Needle Debris and Weapons in City Parks," which outlined options to proactively pick up needles and dangerous debris in specific City parks. On January 29, 2025, through approval of the 2025 Budget Update, Council directed the Public Service to proactively investigate 16 high risk parks in the downtown area, in consultation with affected area Councillors, on a rotating basis every two to four days.

Between April 14 and October 3, 2025, two seasonal staff were assigned to the proactive cleanup crew (the "crew"). The crew were equipped with personal protective equipment, including puncture resistant gloves, sharps containers and paper pickers. The crew were also provided with tracking sheets and filled out detail on any dangerous debris found in the 16 assigned sites, including needles, pipes, drugs or various weapons.

Tracking sheets were submitted regularly for the 16 program sites and a total of 6,358 needles were removed from parks by the crew (Table 1).

Other members of the Public Service working in the downtown, such as Gardeners and Refuse Collection staff, continued to track needles found during their maintenance activities at other sites within the area, as well as those found while working in any of the 16 program sites. An additional 1,064 needles were collected (Table 1).

Table 1:

TOTALS for Proactive Needle Pick Up Sites	**Proactive Collection Crew**	**Other Park Staff**	**TOTAL**
Assiniboine Riverwalk	925	81	1006
Bonnycastle Park	387	46	433
Central Park	672	104	776
Fort Douglas Park	1055	135	1190
Freighthouse	78	30	108
Furby Tot Lot	239	63	302
Giizhigooweeyabikwe	104	49	153
Gord Dong Park	110	42	152
Magnus Eliason	320	39	359
Maryland Bridge	264	6	270
Michelle Jean Park	356	0	356
Millenium Library	316	199	515
Mostyn Park	551	76	627
Pritchard Playground	76	0	76
St. John's Park	484	0	484
Stephen Juba Park	421	194	615
TOTAL	**6358**	**1064**	**7422**

In addition, the crew also found 1,293 pipes, 659 bags with drugs or traces of drugs, and 177 improvised weapons (Table 2).

Table 2:

OTHER ITEMS FOUND	TOTAL
Pipes	1293
Bags with drugs or traces of drugs	659
Improvised weapons (knives, hatchets, crowbars, etc.)	177

As detailed above, the program collected a significant number of needles and debris.

Typically, riverbank parks with encampments had the highest number of needles found. The crew were not to enter encampments due to personal safety risks. Of note, Mostyn Park could not be cleaned during July and August due to the size of the encampment at the site.

The crew were regularly approached by members of the public enquiring about their work. Feedback they received was generally very positive. However, the crew witnessed serious incidents in some of the areas they were working in, such as violent altercations or individuals in various states of distress. As the program continues, the Public Service will consider additional supports for staff participating in the program.

The total budget for this program was $60,000.00, and the amount expended to date is $62,250.00. The additional $2,250.00 was found within the Department's approved operating budget.

Overall, the program was a success as parks were made safer with needles and other debris regularly removed.

Of note, there are six additional parks locations where the Public Service consistently finds high volumes of needles, weapons, and drug paraphernalia (Table 3).

Table 3:

OTHER SITES OF CONCERN	TOTAL
Vimy Ridge Park	325
Jacob Penner Park	231
Cornish Library	155
Alderman John O'Hare Park	142
Broadway Neighbourhood Centre	134
Dynasty Building	118

If the program is expanded to add these locations in the future, the annual incremental cost is estimated at $28,200 which would need to be included in the budget for 2026, 2027, and 2028. This includes an additional 0.5 FTE (for a total estimated program cost of $88,200.00). This expansion would add a third staff member to the existing crew of two staff.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement Date: October 16, 2025

Project Name:
Proactive Cleanup of Needle Debris and Weapons in City Parks

COMMENTS:

As this report is for information purposes, there are no finacial impacts.

J. Ruby, 2025-10-20
J. Ruby CPA, CA
Manager of Finance & Administration

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with: N/A

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

4.9 Inclusive Public Places: Provide and promote the amenities, and the design and maintenance standards, necessary to ensure accessible, safe and sanitary conditions in gathering spaces frequented by the public.

WINNIPEG CLIMATE ACTION PLAN ALIGNMENT

Consideration was given as to whether this report connects to the Winnipeg Climate Action Plan (CAP), and it was determined that the CAP is not applicable to this specific report.

WINNIPEG POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

The information and recommendations presented in this report align with and advance the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Strategy (2021 – 2031) as follows:

Goal #4 - Community Well-Being Supports for those in Greatest Need are Increase.

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Public Works
Division: Parks and Open Space
Prepared by: Karl Thordarson / Dave Domke
Date: November 3, 2025