TO: EPC
Re: Support for the tree bylaw motion

Dear Mr. Mayor and Councillors,

I am writing to urge you to vote in favour of the motion for public engagement on the protection of trees on private land adjacent to streets. This motion, which will open a discussion with Winnipeggers about the benefits of protecting private trees - trees over which the city already has jurisdiction - is an essential first step in crafting a more comprehensive private tree bylaw when the province agrees to a charter change.

Winnipeg is currently losing 1000s of mature trees to construction and development on private properties and no one is counting those losses. Those additional losses would substantially increase the number of trees already being lost to disease and attrition, which are counted, and average 6000 trees per year.

While we can't save every tree and fully understand that a city charter change is required to craft a bylaw covering all trees on private property, action now to engage Winnipegers on a bylaw aimed at protecting private trees adjacent to streets would help to educate our citizens about the pressing need for a more comprehensive private tree bylaw.
So…why is that bylaw so important?

First of all, the lack of protection for private trees jeopardizes the city's goal of expanding our canopy from 17% to even a modest 24%. The international sustainable goal is 30% canopy cover for cities.Those benefits are so profound that 80 scientists recently wrote an open letter to the delegates at COP 30 in which they observed that "urban forests are the most effective and equitable natural infrastructure" to increase urban climate resiliency.

More than 20 cities in More importantly, trees on private land represent the majority - as much as 80% to 90% of our total canopy of 3.1 million trees. This is true for a majority of North American cities - in most only 10% to 15% of all trees are on public land. As a result, it is our private canopy that delivers the lion's share of the close to $54 million in benefits our canopy provides, including their cooling impact during heatwaves. And given that the average number of +30C days are predicted to double over the next few decades, protecting as many of those mature trees as is reasonably possible is essential.

We need to see trees on private land as a public good, because they extend benefits to the entire communityCanada have already enacted private tree bylaws and Winnipeg is lagging far behind.

A majority of you signed the Trees Please Pledge and we/I are/am delighted that you have provided the sustainable budget for the first two pledges: planting 2 to 1 and pruning our trees every 7 years. Now is the time to hear from Winnipegers and address pledge number three: to better protect our mature trees from damage or loss due to construction and development.

Sincerely,
Roxana Mazur
Concerned Winnipeg resident

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