

Trees Please Winnipeg:

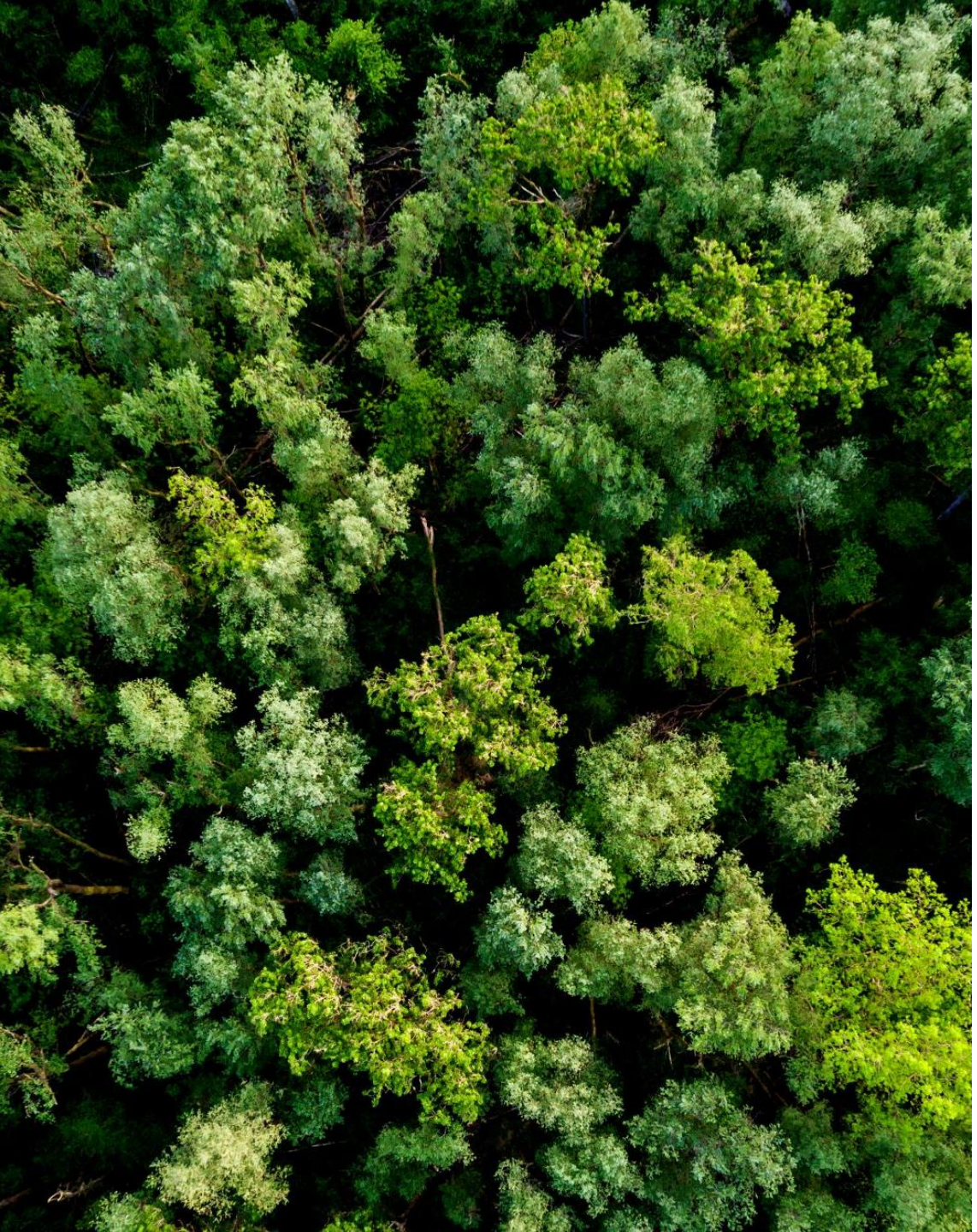
The Tree Bylaw Report – Why We Need To Act Now on A Private Tree Bylaw

Introduction

While Trees Please is delighted that a consolidated Public Tree Bylaw to protect our 300,000+ city trees is now in process, the need to engage Winnipeggers on the drafting of bylaws governing trees on private land is equally urgent because:

- We lose on average 6000 public trees every year to disease and attrition but we're also losing 1000s of mature trees on private land to construction and development **and no one is counting those losses.** While we can't save every tree, action now on a reasonable and considered private tree bylaw would limit those losses.
- Because the reality is this – in a changing climate, trees on private land represent a public good, because they extend a host of benefits to the entire community.





The Private Canopy – Essential Infrastructure in A Warming Climate

- The vast majority - as much as 80% to 90% of Winnipeg's total urban canopy of more than 3 million trees - sits on private land, either in yards or on privately owned natural lands and riverbanks.
- This is true for most North American cities – **only 10% to15% of most urban canopies are publicly owned.** -Paul Reese, Oregon State University.
- That's why more than 10 Ontario cities, 8 in BC, at least 2 major cities in Quebec plus dozens of American cities and towns have in place both public and private tree bylaws to protect their trees and their citizens.
- **And the research shows that cities with private tree bylaws have more mature trees and more tree canopy cover than cities with no such bylaws.** (Landry and Pu 2010; Sung 2012; Hilbert et al. 2019)

The Cost of No Protection: A Zero-Sum Game

Lessons from the Lemay

Had the province not expropriated the privately owned Lemay Forest, some 17,000 high benefit, mature trees would have been clear cut.

That action would have wiped out the benefits those mature trees provide and ***more than cancelled out the approx.17,000 new trees planted on public land that year.***

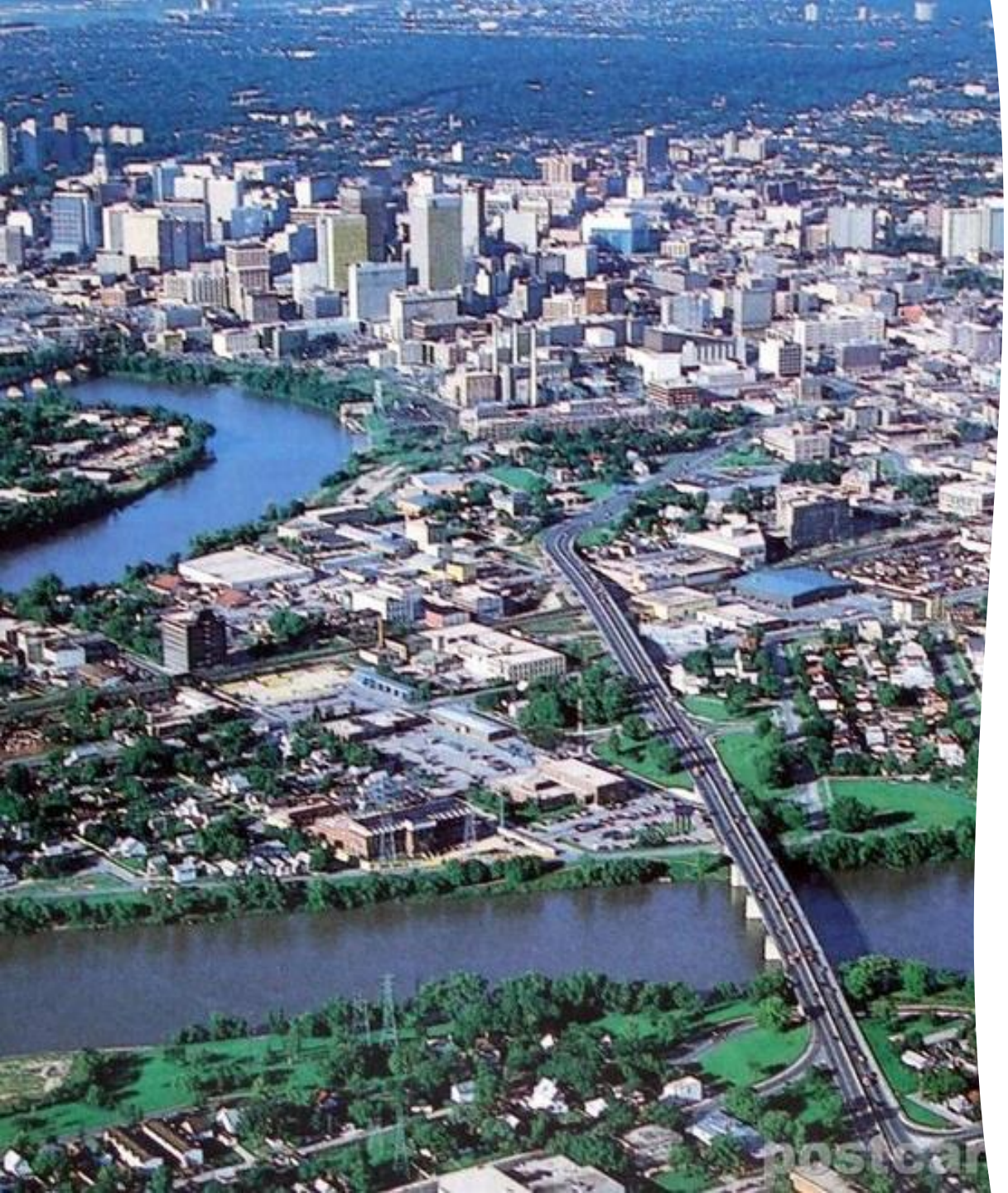
Without a private tree bylaw and better zoning regulations, similar clear cutting could happen at any time on other privately owned forested properties.





In fact - It's Already Happening.

- At 3001 Roblyn Blvd (photo above) – 100s of trees were clear cut prior to any planning submission or development approval. And there are literally dozens of smaller and larger tree loses occurring , in other areas of the city, prior to the city even receiving a submission for development approval.



How A Private Tree Bylaw Benefits Winnipeg:

- **“Mature urban forests are among the most effective, equitable nature-based solutions to increase urban climate resiliency.**

November 2025, An Open Letter to COP 30 signed by 80 scientists

1. Protecting our canopy on private land as soon as possible is essential to climate proof our city and reach the city’s approved goal to increase our canopy cover from 17% to 24%.

2. **Our private trees are responsible for the lion’s share of the almost $54 million in overall benefits** our canopy provides, especially the cooling benefits they deliver during heatwaves.

And given that the average number of 30+ C days are projected to more than double over the next 2 decades, that is a HUGE benefit to all Winnipeggers now, and in the future.

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Action On A Private Tree Bylaw Is Needed Now:

While we understand a charter change is required to draft a comprehensive private tree bylaw, **we recommend:**

1. That the city also act now with the power it does have to protect trees on private properties adjacent to streets and begin that process with public engagement.
2. **That the public service proceed with drafting both a public and private tree bylaw in anticipation of a charter change** and urge the province to act as quickly as possible to implement that change.

To that end, Trees Please would willingly collaborate in efforts to educate the public on the value of private trees and expedite the charter change required.



The Trees Please Pledge: Now is the time to deliver on pledge #3

- 1. **Plant:** For every 1 public tree lost, the city should be replanting at least 2 new trees, and watering those trees adequately so they survive & thrive;
- 2. **Maintain:** Fund a 7-year pruning cycle (the industry standard);
- **3. Protect: Require that tree protection best practices be incorporated into all construction projects to prevent damage and loss of trees.**





Thank you!