Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development – April 16, 2026
Item No. 5 – Proposed Amendment to the Lease Agreement between the City of Winnipeg and Manitoba Cricket Association Inc. at 4403 Waverley Street ("La Barrière Park")

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This submission is in support of the Public Service Recommendation:

1. *That the Winnipeg Public Service explore alternative sites in Winnipeg for the construction of a new cricket pitch and report back by September 2026.*

Protecting Natural Vegetation and Ecological Integrity

Both proposed options to add a fourth cricket field at La Barrière Park would require the removal of natural vegetation. This is not a minor impact. La Barrière Park sits along the La Salle River and is recognized as one of Winnipeg's most natural parks. It is also an extremely busy and diverse park, offering sports fields along with natural activities such as paddling, hiking, birdwatching, and quiet nature experiences—activities that residents increasingly seek for health, well-being, and connection to nature.

Adding more sports fields and parking required to support them would further erode the natural character of the park.

Importance of Grasslands and Multi-Habitat Biodiversity

The area proposed for development includes grassland, a habitat type that is endangered across the Prairies. Grasslands are often overlooked, yet they support rich biodiversity when allowed to thrive.

Waterway environments like the La Salle River corridor are especially sensitive. They contain at least three interconnected habitats:

- River
- Forest/woody cover
- Grassland

Most species rely on more than one of these habitats, and some require all three. According to the *Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation's Species at Risk Guide*, at least **five species at risk in South-Central Manitoba depend on both forest and grassland habitats**. These represent only the species formally listed; many more species rely on these ecosystems and would be threatened by further habitat loss. **The conservation of critical habitat is necessary to support these species.**

Since 2017, **three new sports fields have already been added** to this area. Additional conversion of natural habitat to turf fields and parking would cause significant ecological harm.

Alignment with City Commitments and Planning Principles

The City of Winnipeg has already recognized the importance of biodiversity protection:

- In 2022, the City signed the **Montreal Pledge**, committing to strong municipal leadership in reversing biodiversity loss.
- Current parks planning initiatives emphasize **restoring natural areas** due to their ecological value and lower long-term maintenance needs.
- The city is currently finishing a Greenspace and Natural Corridors Plan and Biodiversity Policy

Preserving the remaining grassland adjacent to forested areas at La Barrière Park directly supports these commitments. Protecting multi-habitat landscapes—especially those connected to waterways—is one of the most effective ways to maintain biodiversity within city limits.

Conclusion

For these reasons, I strongly support the Public Service Recommendation to explore alternative sites for a new cricket pitch rather than expanding sports infrastructure within La Barrière Park.

This approach allows Winnipeg to meet the growing demand for cricket facilities **without replacing endangered grasslands with turf grass** in one of our city's most ecologically valuable natural areas.

Thank you for your consideration.

Species at risk in South-Central Manitoba depend on both forest and grassland habitats

