

September 20, 2022

Dear OURS-Winnipeg Committee,

GREENSPACE & BIODIVERSITY

Thank you for writing and asking about the ideas of the common lands with green space and biodiversity. Frankly, there is not enough green space in many neighbourhoods. We need to implement higher standards for “Winnipeg for environmental and ecological protection of greenspace.” According to the alternative municipal budget “planning and investing in greenspace will provide economic, environmental, health and social benefits...never has it been more critical than it is today to have a master plan for greenspace and a biodiversity policy” (Alternative Municipal Budget, 2022).

Question 1. Describe your commitment to ensure the Master Greenspace and Natural Corridors (includes river corridors) Plan By-law and Biodiversity Policy will be completed and implemented in a timely manner?

I am fully supportive of the new policy direction the city has taken in regards to the amended “Our Winnipeg 2045” and “Complete Communities 2.0” and would continue the already wonderful work of citizens to create a Master Greenspace and Natural Corridors Plan By-law that includes a Biodiversity Policy. Public Space is part of the common good and as such we need to think long-term. In Indigenous philosophy we talk of preparing for seven generations. As mayor this ideal will govern my decisions and the by-laws and agreements used by the city will also reflect this policy. Related to this is our team’s platform regarding the Child-Friendly City Policy. The main theme of the Child-Friendly City Policy is that all civic By-Laws, Regulations, plans and priorities must be looked at through the eyes of children and evaluated in terms of how well they benefit children. If our children are successful, then we will be successful.

All these policies and regulations are meaningless unless they have teeth. We need to ensure that future city councils and mayors do not sell out to the highest bidder in an attempt to obtain benefits. For far too long Mayors and Council have been under a cloud of suspicion about what they do and their work with land developers. This does not benefit land developers who want to build quality family homes and businesses. Nor does it do anything for the reputation of civic politics.

Question 2. Describe your commitment and time frame to acquire 1000 additional acres of public parkland in the City of Winnipeg while greenspace is still available.

In 2002 the city passed development guidelines which are supposed to ensure that at least 8% of new developments have dedicated green space and the city if provided with 2% in cash. How often is that respected, when there is a provision whereby the developer can opt to pay a sum of money instead? Meaning no green space and the city can use that money for general operations. It is my intention to remove that provision.

a) The Developer shall dedicate a minimum of 8% of the net area* for public park purposes and pay the remaining 2% in cash.

*Net area is defined as all land within the Development Application excluding property acquired by the City for impoundment areas, regional street road allowances

(including any widening reserves) and land drainage flow conveyances.

b) If land is not dedicated for public purposes, the Developer shall provide a cash payment representing 10% of the appraised value of the Development Application, as determined by the City and prior to the release of subdivision bylaws by the City.

Incredibly on Sept 11, 2022, I had the chance to meet newcomers living in Amber Trails who were protesting that there is very little green space; that land developers have been able to make promises and then break promises about the development of green park space. It seems it is easier to take the cash and to turn a blind eye. Obviously, the reason developers want to pay cash instead of making a park with amenities is that they can make more money selling homes on that common land.

We should all know the story of Riel House. We should not allow what happened to Riel House to ever happen again. This National Historic site saw its farmland sold off by the city to make way for development. The remaining house was then given to the federal government in a decrepit state for them to fix. We sold the inheritance of all Winnipeggers, Manitobans and Canadians.

Question 3. Describe your commitment to implement a Biodiversity Policy?

3. When I came home, to be in the land of my ancestors, after having been away from 13 years serving with the Army and Navy in Quebec, I was so happy. There is something special about the prairies and all creatures that make their home here. The Red River is a land which is full of spirits and connection. We have an obligation to uphold the interconnectedness of all creation, even inside the city. Ensuring that it is cared for and has space is important. The deer along the Seine River are important. Omand's Creek should be clean and be allowed to be vibrant to encourage biodiversity. There needs to be natural grass lands around our city. This would not only encourage plant life, but also animals. A great Biodiversity should not only be for far away places, but here, at home in Winnipeg. Many People from around the world would love to visit a location like Winnipeg where we're really culturally diverse, and also committed to maintaining and encouraging biodiversity.

Here are some 44 ideas about what the city can do to encourage Biodiversity. These ideas are used by many jurisdictions to help create a philosophy of biodiversity

1. Enhance Winnipeg's network of interconnected, protected and well-managed public and private open spaces to accommodate species' movements and adaptation to local climate change impacts.
2. Ensure that there is an ecologically viable size of habitats conserved to accommodate climate change impacts.
3. Ensure that this network can accommodate future climate change scenarios likely to impact biodiversity and ecosystem functioning.
4. Give consideration to the requirements of gene flow within meta-populations to ensure the sustainability of species within ecosystems.
5. Ensure that ecosystems are surrounded by suitable buffer zones to minimize negative impacts from existing and future development.
6. Integrate terrestrial, aquatic and marine climate change planning and management activities throughout the Winnipeg Municipal area and surrounding neighbouring municipalities.
7. Adopt the precautionary principle where climate change impacts are not currently understood, while continuously striving to enhance sustainability of natural ecosystems.

8. Accommodate change: acknowledge that there will be impacts from climate change and implement measures to minimize the negative aspects of these impacts.
9. Identify gaps in our current understanding of climate change impacts on biodiversity.
10. Key natural open spaces are protected through formal proclamation and other areas are secured using a range of innovative approaches.
11. Government, residents and private organizations take responsibility for proactively conserving natural areas under their ownership.
12. Open spaces are integrated into the urban fabric.
13. Densification is promoted where appropriate and urban sprawl is minimized.
14. Invasive alien species are controlled and where possible eradicated.
15. Degraded natural open spaces are restored through government and community efforts.
16. Incentives for Winnipeg residents and organizations are expanded to protect biodiversity.
17. Pursue knowledge generation of projected climate change impacts on biodiversity through focused research and engaging in research partnerships to maximize learning opportunities and build appropriate regional capacity.
18. Pursue the sharing and generation of scientific, social and indigenous knowledge systems through participatory processes.
19. Improve mutual understanding of the benefits communities and other stakeholders derive from ecosystem services within Winnipeg.
20. Advance the sharing of accurate and useful information between institutions and communities of Winnipeg to increase capacity and ability of Winnipeg residents to take action.
21. Ensure that learning outcomes arise from all actions through effective monitoring and evaluation processes.
22. Evaluate options for action, including conducting vulnerability assessments, improving understanding of related issues like ecosystem restoration and an understanding of novel ecosystems' functioning.
23. Integrate indigenous knowledge with scientific knowledge on biodiversity.
24. All Winnipeg residents are educated on the value of Winnipeg's biodiversity and the ecosystem services that it provides.
25. Develop audience-appropriate education and awareness materials for different sectors and age groups and use a variety of communication methods including social media and technology to raise awareness.
26. Implement capacity building programs at the grass roots level for communities.
27. Organizations to implement internal green value systems.
28. Residents to take responsibility for educating themselves on biodiversity protection.
29. Improve integration and cooperation between different stakeholders and sectors.
30. Local government to provide up-to-date and accessible contact information where residents can report environmental pollution and degradation.
31. Local government spending on biodiversity protection is shared with stakeholders.
32. Promote meaningful and coordinated action within all sectors of Winnipeg and her communities.
33. Use enhancements to existing policy frameworks and legislation to take immediate action.
34. Address non-climate change impacts on biodiversity in an integrated manner.
35. Pursue innovative action plans to achieve these aims, including stewardship approaches and prioritizing the Green Economy, whilst not demonizing failure.
36. Promote job creation in climate change adaptation action.
37. Integrate mitigation and adaptation actions that prioritize least regrets options and maximize multiple co-benefits deriving from action.
38. Employ the usage of appropriate and enforceable tools for the protection of biodiversity.

39. Ensure that existing planning and implementation is done in an effective and efficient manner.
40. Establish an effective “green police” that enforces regulations and by-laws that protect biodiversity.
41. By-laws to protect biodiversity are regularly updated and reviewed.
42. Implement incentives that encourage organizations and individuals to protect biodiversity.
43. Local government to lead the way by complying with legislation on their own properties.
44. Pollution of natural open spaces is prevented by ensuring municipal infrastructure is maintained and in good working order, and illegal dumping is controlled.

I appreciate the time to share my thoughts in full sentences and not political talking points. We can, with new leadership and a generational change in leadership, be more collaborative, listen to each other and help produce better outcomes for all citizens who reside in our city.

From my desk, Tapwe akwa khitwam

Robert Falcon Ouellette
Mayoral candidate