



**URGENT ACTION NEEDED:
PROTECTING OUR COLLECTIVE AGENCY AND
PRESERVING LEMAY FOREST**

JAN 14, 2025

WINNIPEG, MB

Dear Chairperson, His Worship Mayor Gillingham, and City of Winnipeg Executive Policy Committee members, councillors Browaty, Duncan, Lukes, Rollins, and Santos.

We have formally submitted letters urging the City of Winnipeg Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development to consider adopting a rights-based lens on land development and property management and amending legal frameworks to better protect people and ecosystems.

While the merits of such an approach are considered as a matter of public policy, urgent action is needed to intervene in protecting Lemay Forest which would likely not benefit from this legislation by the time it is enacted by our municipal government.

As a result of inaction on the part of the municipal government, land defenders have gone from being in the legal crossfire to facing legal prosecution. Charges have already been filed against a Winnipeg citizen in connection with their efforts to support land defenders attending Ceremony in protection of this vital space, and further legal action has been threatened.

We would like to reiterate an argument we presented in our reply to Councillor Eadie:

While it may be true that the “judicial system has obviously sided with the private property rights” as we’ve seen in plenty of cases, and while we can appreciate that the current legal framework places the City of Winnipeg in a tremendously challenging situation regarding those rights, what we want to bring to your attention is that a growing body of federal legislation on Human Rights is about to place the City of Winnipeg at equal or greater risk of prosecution.

For the sake of argument, let’s assume the City of Winnipeg is going to be sued either way. If that were true, would it not be preferable to do so in defense of our ecosystems and democratic sovereignty over our spaces, rather than in defense of the status quo? Do we want the headline to read “City of Winnipeg Sued for Defending Citizens Protecting Lemay Forest” or “City of Winnipeg Sued over Multiple Human Rights Infractions”?

We ask you to stand with the people. Your continued silence on this matter, as the debacle plays out to the embarrassment of our city and province, is unacceptable. We no longer have the luxury of adopting a defeatist stance on this problem. We need to shift away from “Why it can’t be done” to “How can it be done” and get to work on the issue, together.

It is equally disgraceful that the City of Winnipeg seems content to allow its citizens to fight its battles and take on all the risk, relying on a series of injunctions to put a halt to tree cutting until a resolution can be reached rather than engaging with the issue head-on.

While the city and province express in their land acknowledgments that they are moving toward truth and reconciliation, they are failing to listen to the truth of the history of the Lemay Forest land. By allowing tree-cutting permits in an area where Indigenous sacred ceremonies have been held for over 30 years, they are permitting the desecration of the land. Is your land acknowledgment truly committed to these principles, or is it merely performative?



GREY JAY
HEALING INC.

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Lemay Forest must be protected and preserved for its ecological, cultural, and historical value to our community—as expressed by the community itself. Furthermore, we must send a strong message that it is not acceptable for corporate interests to hold our spaces hostage, threatening to destroy them in order to obtain the best possible deal.

Sincerely,

Rene Hince, Director, Grey Jay Healing Inc.