

# WINNIPEG NETWORK OF DOG OWNER GROUPS INC. (WINDOG)

JULY 6, 2015 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

## ANNUAL REPORT

The Annual Report provides an overview of WINDOG's activities in 2014. The organization's first year has been marked with several important successes.

In 2012 and 2013, during the lead up to the establishment of WINDOG, Directors of Winnipeg's three off-leash area stewardship groups (Kilcona, Little Mountain and Maple Grove) met on several occasions to discuss dog park management issues and the obvious lack of support for off-leash dog parks on City Council and within the public service.

The city administration's indifference to the state of Winnipeg dog parks was well known. The public service had repeatedly declined requests from private citizens, off-leash area stewardship groups and even City Councillors for improvements to existing dog parks, and for more off-leash green space. In their dealings with the Parks department, Presidents and Co-chairs of off-leash area stewardship groups detected a strong anti-dog park animus.

Boards of Winnipeg's off-leash area stewardship organizations were concerned that the city was losing its off-leash space at an alarming rate. Maple Grove was the first to be downsized (2006) and Little Mountain and Kilcona were under threat. Transcona and downtown Winnipeg's only off-leash areas had been closed, and Charleswood and Brenda Leipsic were about to be decommissioned. Sturgeon and Silver would eventually fall to the same fate. The City was not creating new off-leash areas to replace the ones it closed.

In 2014 the founding off-leash area stewardship groups created a coalition to give dog clubs a stronger voice and a greater ability to advocate for Winnipeg dogs and dog owners. Organizers developed WINDOG's constituting framework and by-laws, incorporated the organization, and held an inaugural AGM in May 2014. Each club appointed a representative to serve on WINDOG's Board of Directors

Immediately following the AGM, WINDOG announced its first priority would be to increase quality off-leash recreational space. The Board affirmed dog owners and their supporters wanted to see a change in the way the City managed its dog parks and they wanted to be part of the change.

To increase quality off-leash recreational space, WINDOG would need to change attitudes on City Council and within the public service. Taking advantage of the fact that

2014 was a municipal election year, WINDOG launched its “I own a dog AND I vote!” campaign to elect a dog-friendly Mayor and Council.

The first obstacle was that - as a start-up advocacy group - WINDOG lacked brand recognition and credibility. Seeking the endorsement of an established, high profile, well-respected animal welfare organization, WINDOG met with Winnipeg Humane Society CEO, Bill McDonald. Mr. McDonald’s strong public endorsement of WINDOG’s campaign lent legitimacy to the initiative. At the same time, Winnipeg Animal Services COO, Leland Gordon was speaking publicly about the important role off-leash parks play in socializing animals and reducing incidents of dog bites.

To foster brand awareness, WINDOG developed a marketing plan, created a distinctive logo, an events banner, and promotional material. To connect with the public, WINDOG’s technical group launched an interactive website with an integrated Facebook page, and Directors attended a social media marketing workshop.

To win the support of voting dog lovers and educate the general public about the value of dog parks to the wider community, WINDOG published a series of articles on the new website – providing the rationale for more off-leash space, outlining WINDOG’s three-tiered model of neighbourhood, community and regional off-leash areas, and describing a range of issues that prompted the “I own a dog...” campaign.

To raise public awareness about off-leash area issues and WINDOG’s proposed solutions, Directors and volunteers set up promotional booths at major dog events – the Humane Society’s Paws in Motion; Manitoba Pet Expo; Winnipeg Dog Fest; Little Mountain and Maple Grove dog clubs’ annual barbecues; and at local dog parks.

WINDOG’s Board made presentations at City Hall and at public consultations in support of an expansion and improvements to Little Mountain Dog Park and the re-purposing of St. Charles’ underused Voyageur Park as an off-leash area. WINDOG also made presentations at City Hall highlighting off-leash area management and health and safety issues.

WINDOG’s Board contacted the major media outlets and issued a press release. The media responded enthusiastically. Their coverage was overwhelmingly positive. WINDOG was ready to move forward to elect a “dog-friendly” Mayor and Council.

WINDOG’s Board developed a survey to evaluate how “dog-friendly” each of the 63 candidates was. Candidates’ responses to the survey were posted on WINDOG’s website and contenders were rated as super dog friendly, dog friendly, dog neutral and dog unfriendly. Comments from the public were encouraged and a healthy dialogue ensued.

The results of the “I own a dog AND I vote!” campaign were gratifying. Half the candidates who were elected - Mayor Bowman and Councillors Sharma, Browaty,

Wyatt, Allard, Orlikow, Mayes, and Morantz - are self-declared “dog-friendlies” who have publicly endorsed WINDOG’s model for dog parks. And since the election, several Councillors have demonstrated they’re more dog-friendly than they have been in the past.

In concrete terms, improvements have occurred in existing Winnipeg dog parks. Following a public outcry at Little Mountain Park in 2014, the City decided it would no longer use gopher poison in any of the city’s off-leash areas. Maple Grove Dog Park has new underground waste disposal units and the Parks department no longer requires volunteers to empty litter baskets.

Winnipeg’s off-leash space appears to be expanding. In March 2015, City Council committed \$300,000 to fulfill Mayor Bowman’s election promise to create a fenced dog park at The Forks. Councillor Russ Wyatt has taken an innovative approach to creating a new off-leash area in Transcona. For the first time the city required a developer to pay for an off-leash in a new subdivision. Councillor Morantz publicly favours this approach.

Councillors are becoming pro-active when it comes to expanding off-leash green space. In 2014 the EKT Community Council instructed the public service to identify lands in Transcona, and North and East Kildonan that can be re-purposed as neighbourhood dog parks. There has also been a significant shift – if not in public policy – at least in practice. The City is exploring ways to replace Charleswood and Brenda Leipsic dog parks, meeting with stakeholders and holding public consultations.

This is a major departure from past practice. In 2013 Parks administrators refused repeated requests from Kilcona, Maple Grove and Little Mountain to hold public consultations to solicit input into new off-leash area guidelines.

In May 2014 the proposed off-leash area guidelines were presented for approval to the Standing Policy on Protection and Community Service and the Executive Policy Committee. WINDOG intervened, making presentations to both policy committees. WINDOG objected to the lack of public consultation and demonstrated that the report was seriously flawed. The consultant’s recommendations were based on unfounded assumptions and sloppy analysis.

A week before the proposed guidelines were to go to City Council for approval, the Executive Policy Committee concurred with WINDOG’s criticism of the proposed guidelines and declined to approve them.

In the end, EPC voted to shelve the flawed guidelines and start from scratch to create a comprehensive off-leash area management plan based on broad consultation with dog park stakeholders. In March City Council earmarked \$100,000 in the 2016 capital budget for this purpose.

With 50% of City Council strongly supporting WINDOG's three-tiered model, the Board is hopeful it will become the foundation of the new off-leash area management plan. Several Councillors indicate they expect WINDOG, as a key stakeholder, to play a central role in developing the plan.

WINDOG FINANCIAL STATEMENT

January 1, 2014 - December 31, 2014

DATE	Transaction Details	Debits	Credits	Balance
April 24/14	Deposit (Kilcona)		250.00	250.00
April 24/14	Deposit (Maple Grove)		250.00	500.00
June 4/14	Deposit (donation)		25.00	525.00
June 10/14	Cheque #1	67.74		457.26
June 11/14	Cheque #2	165.00		292.26
June 11/14	Donation		20.00	312.26
July 9/14	Cheque #4	49.72		262.54
Aug. 27/14	Donations		24.50	287.04
Sept. 13/14	Donations		47.15	334.19
Dec. 31, 2014		282.46	616.65 3	34.19

Cheque #1 - Jeff Henry re: WINDOG Banner

Cheque #2 - Jordan Lobe re: WINDOG Articles of Incorporation

Cheque #4 - Jeff Henry re: WINDOG Business Cards

There was an error in writing cheque #3 and it was subsequently destroyed.