

# The Lance

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# Sharing habitat conservation



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## ST. VITAL

Canada has 13 cities on Wikipedia's list of world cities with urban parks that are greater than 1,000 acres.

The list includes:

- Edmonton's North Saskatchewan Valley parks (18,000 acres);
- Toronto's Rouge Park (12,356 acres);
- Calgary's Fish Creek Provincial Park (3,331 acres) and Nose Hill Park (2,785 acres);
- Regina's Wascana Park (2,300 acres);
- Winnipeg's Assiniboine Park and Forest (1,100 acres);

Edmonton is only 1.4 times larger than Winnipeg and yet it has protected an impressive 18,000 acres of urban park land along the North Saskatchewan River.

To put this into local perspective, the parks along the Seine River Greenway in Winnipeg occupy only 775 acres.

The U.S. and Canada Green City Index compares 27 major cities using a variety of

indicators. On average, 12 per cent of the land base in these cities is green space. Some cities, such as Minneapolis, New York, Ottawa, and Montreal have close to 20 per cent. By comparison, Winnipeg has approximately 7.5 per cent.

City-wide, Winnipeg parklands have actually decreased from 9,600 acres in 2013 to 8,900 acres in 2018.

Winnipeg has created 54 new parks (385 acres, average size seven acres) in new communities since 2013. During this same period, it has removed 15 large park spaces (1,200 acres, average size 80 acres) from its inventory. Twelve of these large parcels were golf courses that contain high quality natural habitats. Only 2,800 acres (2 per cent) of the city's parkland is classified as natural habitat.

These trends are very disturbing. Winnipeg is becoming an ecological desert.

Large and interconnected spaces are crucial to the conservation of biodiversity. The Victoria Capital Region District has embraced the philosophy that Nature Needs Half ([www.natureneedshalf.com](http://www.natureneedshalf.com)) in planning an interconnected regional parks system. It has spent \$48 million to protect 11,082 acres of new parks as a part of its regional growth strategy.

Excluding the waterway acquisition along the Seine River, the last time Winnipeg bought land for parks may have been the



Photo by Michele Kading

*If we conserve and restore prairie, wetland, forest, and river habitats, wildlife will return to the city.*

Bois-des-Esprits in 2002, when the city contributed \$1.6 million.

Conservation is a shared responsibility. Edmonton, Toronto, Calgary, and Regina all have provincial or national parks within their city limits. Why are there no federal or provincial nature parks in Winnipeg?

Once city land is developed, it will never return to wetland, prairie, or forest. Our children will have to live with the amount of green space we conserve today. This can be 7.5 per cent, 20 per cent, or even 50 per cent.

The choice is yours.

*Michele Kading is a community correspondent for St. Vital and the executive director of Save Our Seine, [www.saveourseine.com](http://www.saveourseine.com)*