



Major Gift from Bob Williams Supports Tree Planting and Forest Health at Assiniboine Park

For immediate release: Winnipeg, September 24, 2025 – In recognition of National Tree Day, the Assiniboine Park Conservancy is proud to announce a major gift from Manitoba philanthropist Bob Williams in support of a healthier, greener future for Assiniboine Park. The generous \$600,000 donation will support the planting and establishment of 200 new trees annually over the next three years, while also providing essential resources to support their ongoing care and maintenance, ensuring they grow strong and flourish for generations to come.

“We are deeply grateful to Mr. Williams for this generous gift,” said Ray Karasevich, President & CEO of the Assiniboine Park Conservancy. “His support will enhance the beauty of the Park and enrich the experience for all who visit. This donation is a meaningful investment in the community and the natural spaces we all cherish.”

Williams, President and CEO of Swancoat Investments Ltd., has deep roots in the St. James neighbourhood where he grew up just steps from Assiniboine Park. A longtime champion of nature and conservation, Williams was a founding member of the Assiniboine Park Conservancy Board of Directors and one of the first major donors to support the Park’s ambitious redevelopment campaign launched in 2009. A bronze polar bear sculpture donated by Williams in 2014 greets visitors at the entrance to the Assiniboine Park Zoo.

“I grew up just across the street from Assiniboine Park, so it’s always been a special place for me and a source of inspiration and peace,” said Williams. “Knowing this gift will help the Park thrive and offer lasting beauty, comfort, and connection to others for years to come is deeply meaningful and brings me great joy.”

Williams’ transformative gift will support the planting and care of flowering varieties of hawthorn, crab apple, cherry, plum, pear, mountain ash, and lilac trees in key locations across the Park, bringing seasonal colour and biodiversity to this much-loved green space. Planting got underway this fall.

“This gift will bring an infusion of beauty and colour to the Park, while also providing the resources needed to ensure these trees thrive for decades,” said Gerald Dieleman, Senior Director of Horticulture. “It’s an investment in both the present and the future, supporting sustainable growth, greater species diversity, and the long-term health of our urban forest.”

The donation comes at a critical time, as the Conservancy advances a comprehensive **Forest Management Strategy** aimed at preserving and enhancing the Park’s tree canopy. Many of the Park’s towering elms, maples, and oaks are now reaching the end of their natural lifespans and face growing threats from climate change, disease, soil stress, and invasive pests like the Emerald Ash Borer.

The need for action is not unique to Assiniboine Park. Winnipeg’s urban forest, made up of over three million trees, is under serious threat from invasive pests, climate change, and urban development, with up to 50% of its public trees at risk.

Key goals of the strategy include:

- **Planting and regeneration:** At least 300 trees planted per year, with a long-term goal of increasing canopy cover.
- **Species diversity:** Applying the “10-20-30 Rule” (no more than 10% of one species, 20% of one genus, 30% of one family).
- **Forest health and maintenance:** Managing invasive species, monitoring pests, and pruning trees on a 12-year cycle.
- **Public education:** Raising awareness about the value of trees through educational programs and community events.

The plan aligns with the City of Winnipeg’s Urban Forest Strategy and aims to ensure the Park remains a vital green space for future generations.

“Trees are an essential part of Winnipeg’s identity and quality of life,” said Mayor Scott Gillingham. “This generous gift to Assiniboine Park strengthens our city’s urban forest and contributes to our commitment to grow and renew Winnipeg’s tree canopy. Last year, during Winnipeg’s 150th anniversary, we planted 150 trees to honour residents who have made a difference in our community, including 30 in the Mayor’s Grove here at Assiniboine Park. With gifts like this, we continue that legacy and ensure a greener, healthier city for generations to come.”

Trees for Tomorrow Match Challenge

With Williams’ support, the Assiniboine Park Conservancy is launching a limited-time **Trees for Tomorrow Match Challenge**. From now to the end of the year, Williams will match every donation to the Trees for Tomorrow Fund **dollar-for-dollar up to \$10,000**, doubling the impact of community support. Donations will support the planting and long-term care and maintenance of trees in Assiniboine Park, turning today’s gifts into living legacies that provide beauty, cleaner air, and habitat for wildlife for generations to come.

For more information, please contact:

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