

Vision and Governance: National Urban Park for the Saskatoon Region



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Canada

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Proposed National Urban Park in the Saskatoon Region

Since the fall of 2021, the Meewasin Valley Authority (Meewasin), Parks Canada, and many partners have been working together to explore the potential for a national urban park (NUP) in the Saskatoon region through Parks Canada's National Urban Parks Program. The City of Saskatoon has been an engaged and supportive partner from the beginning. The City's administration representatives are active members on the NUP Steering Committee and multiple staff from across several departments have been engaged in this work.

The proposed NUP presents opportunities to enhance and elevate the existing urban park and to advance the vision and objectives of the National Urban Parks Program: conserving nature, connecting people with nature, and advancing reconciliation. This project has been guided by a shared commitment to ensure that First Nations and Métis voices and perspectives are meaningfully included in the creation and operation of a national urban park. The City of Saskatoon has also played an important role in leading and facilitating the local partnership circle exploration of potential Cultural Spaces, work that aligns closely with the NUP project and supports reconciliation.

Vision:

The Saskatoon region national urban park aspires to conserve imperiled prairie grasslands and wetlands and protect vital ecosystems that are critical to urban health and traditional First Nations and Métis ways of life.

Weaving through Saskatchewan's largest population centre, this space emphasizes the importance of outdoor experiences to our collective well-being and has been designated as a featured Canadian destination to ensure all will be able to know and connect with the natural, cultural and recreational value of this area for generations to come.

Boundary:

The potential boundaries are proposed to include publicly owned land within the current Meewasin Valley, which includes trails in and around the Saskatoon area on both sides of the South Saskatchewan River.

The City of Saskatoon has been directly involved in screening city-owned land in the Meewasin jurisdiction, using criteria from the Interim National Urban Parks Policy to recommend what should be included. The attached Draft Boundary map in Annex A is a result of that collaborative work. All risks and responsibilities associated with managing lands within the proposed park boundary remain with the landowner.

Governance:

A national urban park in the Saskatoon region will not be federally administered and Parks Canada will not own any land. Meewasin, as the lead partner, would continue to operate the park under the existing

provincial Meewasin Valley Authority Act and coordinate park operations with partners. See graphic Annex B.

Meewasin will maintain its existing governance structure, while establishing a new advisory committee and formalizing a collaborative relationship with Parks Canada to support the national urban park. The City of Saskatoon would have a seat on the advisory committee. Terms of reference for this committee are being drafted and will be finalized prior to designation.

For clarity, Parks Canada will be a collaborative partner providing funds to Meewasin. Parks Canada will not be on Meewasin's Board of Directors as a 'participating party' under the Meewasin Valley Authority Act, as is the case with the City of Saskatoon, the University of Saskatchewan and the Province of Saskatchewan.

The direct and ongoing relationship between Meewasin and Parks Canada will be built on collaboration and mutual commitment to shared objectives. Parks Canada respects Meewasin's leadership and community-driven approach to conserving lands within its jurisdiction. Meewasin can benefit from the expertise from inside Parks Canada Agency. Parks Canada intends to create a national network of NUPs and members will benefit from learning and leadership opportunities alongside other NUPs across Canada. Parks Canada may also fund other Saskatoon Region partners directly, where there is an opportunity to advance the objectives.

Some investment priorities for the park:

Partners want to enhance the experiences for everyone in one of Canada's most scenic river valleys. The national urban park would offer exciting features and promote deeper connections to the beautiful Meewasin Valley through investments linked to each objective.

- **To conserve nature:**
 - Enhanced conservation of habitat and biodiversity.
 - Create a Seed Bank and Greenhouse Learning Centre - a space for conservation research and learning programs for all ages.
- **To connect people and communities to nature:**
 - Enhanced trails, amenities and programs. As the city expands, more residents and visitors require access to outdoor spaces. An elevated urban park in the heart of Saskatoon provides opportunities for rejuvenation.
 - Create a potential Visitor Centre – a launching point for park exploration. Tours, self-guided hikes, information on things to do in the region, and more!
- **To advance reconciliation:**
 - Cultural Spaces – protection of places for ceremony and connection for First Nation and Métis Peoples. Dedicated spaces for celebrating and sharing First Nations and Métis culture, language and storytelling.
 - Sustained partnerships with Saskatoon Tribal Council and Métis Nation-Saskatchewan to centre indigenous voices, experiences and ways of knowing in park management.

One of the key priorities established by the steering committee during the exploration of the potential national urban park is the development of a Visitor Centre. The Visitor Centre concept was included in the public engagement conducted during summer 2025 and was supported. Meewasin has explored the redevelopment potential of its headquarters building at 402 3rd Avenue South for more than 20 years, including the potential to partner with the private sector to help finance the project. The building is more than 50 years old and no longer meets Meewasin's current needs. Recent exploration for a National Urban Park Visitor Centre has included office space for Meewasin and market analysis to determine the additional highest and best use for the site. Meewasin intends to explore developer interest in the site and evaluate potential partnerships.

Engagement:

- Public and First Nation/Métis community engagement for the proposed national urban park in the Saskatoon Region was conducted between July 2 and September 26, 2025, led by Meewasin with input from Parks Canada, the Steering Committee, and Indigenous partners.
- In total, 4,396 individuals were engaged, including diverse voices. Of those engaged, 57% were members of the public and 43% were First Nations and Métis participants.
- Results showed overwhelming support for the proposed park's vision, boundaries, governance, and investment priorities.

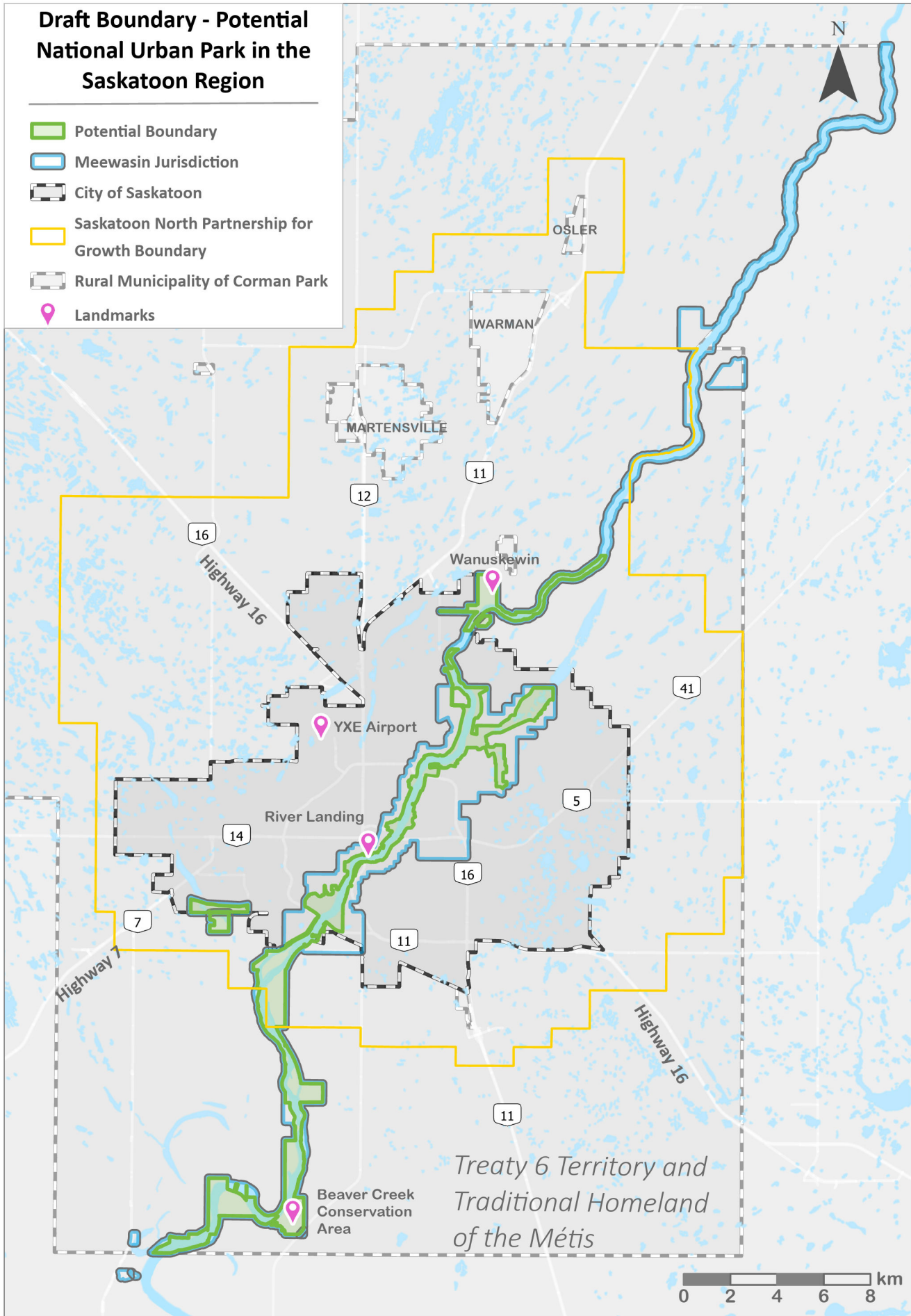
Designation of the national urban park is dependent on Parks Canada securing the necessary federal funding. Funding will be confirmed prior to Meewasin signing a designation agreement.

Together, we have the opportunity to create an enhanced park that is inclusive, vibrant, and protected for generations to come.

We ask that the City of Saskatoon support Meewasin and Parks Canada entering into an agreement to designate the portion of the Meewasin Valley identified on the Draft Boundary map as a National Urban Park which includes City of Saskatoon owned land.

Draft Boundary - Potential National Urban Park in the Saskatoon Region

-  Potential Boundary
-  Meewasin Jurisdiction
-  City of Saskatoon
-  Saskatoon North Partnership for Growth Boundary
-  Rural Municipality of Corman Park
-  Landmarks



Annex B

