



Ted Jacob, Calgary Herald  
Electra, a border collie, plays with an exercise ball at River Park. The shortage of off-leash sites is acute in the northeast and southwest.

## Report would add off-leash dog areas

JASON MARKUSOFF  
CALGARY HERALD

Off-leash dog areas should be built into plans for Calgary's new suburban communities, city staff suggest in a report going to a council committee next Monday.

City surveys have found a majority of dog owners and even non-owners believe there should be more places in the city for pooches to run free.

The shortage is especially acute in the northeast and southwest, as population and developments explode without new off-leash areas sprouting alongside them.

As a stop-gap without new city-sanctioned off-leash sites, many residents have been bringing their dogs to run in undeveloped portions of some new northeast suburbs, Ald. Jim Stevenson said.

"So because we haven't planned it, we're going to have a lot more people complaining as the vacant lots fill up," he said Monday.

The city counts 138 off-leash areas around the city — including a few major ones like River Park and Southland Natural Area, and many much smaller land strips.

"There aren't enough usable ones," said Patty Lew-Lapointe, who walks her Belgian shepherd cross and Doberman cross daily at River Park.

"There's a lot of areas designated as off-leash, but you'd have to be a mountain goat to use them. Or they're strips of land beside busy roads."

The city is working with communities to determine where new off-leash sites in existing communities could

be created. Ald. Ric McIver said that invites conflict between dog walkers and those who find running terriers and their droppings a nuisance.

"It comes across as an amenity to half the community that they don't have, and the other half of the community as something they'll fight against," he said. "You make the most people happy when you put them in right from the outset."

Very few new suburbs include off-leash sites, despite being required to set aside large portions of developments for recreation and other amenities.

"We try and make those as inclusive as possible for all users of our communities," said Grace Lui of Carma, the city's largest residential developers. "What we find is that off-leash areas cater to a very specific component."

Lew-Lapointe said her beloved River Park off-leash area appears slated to be downsized, as well, to make more room for other park users. But with two new communities going up on the former military base nearby, demand may likely increase for the dog run, she noted.

The city has also developed draft guidelines for all new off-leash areas in existing and new communities. They should be either fenced or not border roadways, and shouldn't bisect regional pathways.

City surveys showed a high demand for waste bins in the off-leash areas, clear separation from other areas, and drinking water for dogs.

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## Fundraiser gives fans a chance to rub elbows with NHL greats

**HOCKEY FOR HOMELESS** • Have you ever dreamed of lacing up with some hockey heroes?

Next month a fundraising event offers Calgarians a chance to log some ice time with several NHL greats, including former Flame Theoren Fleury, and raise money for the down and out.

Hockey for the Homeless will be held in Calgary for the second

time, this year on Nov. 20.

For \$400, a donor will play a three-game tournament with and against ex-NHLers, enjoy a dinner reception and listen to guest speakers.

The event is relatively new in Calgary, but it has been an annual tradition in Toronto since 1996 and in Montreal since 2004, generating more than \$1.8 million

while helping more than 10,000 people.

Hockey for the Homeless was started in 1996 by a group of Toronto businessmen. The group was aiming to raise \$2,000, but topped \$8,500 that first year.

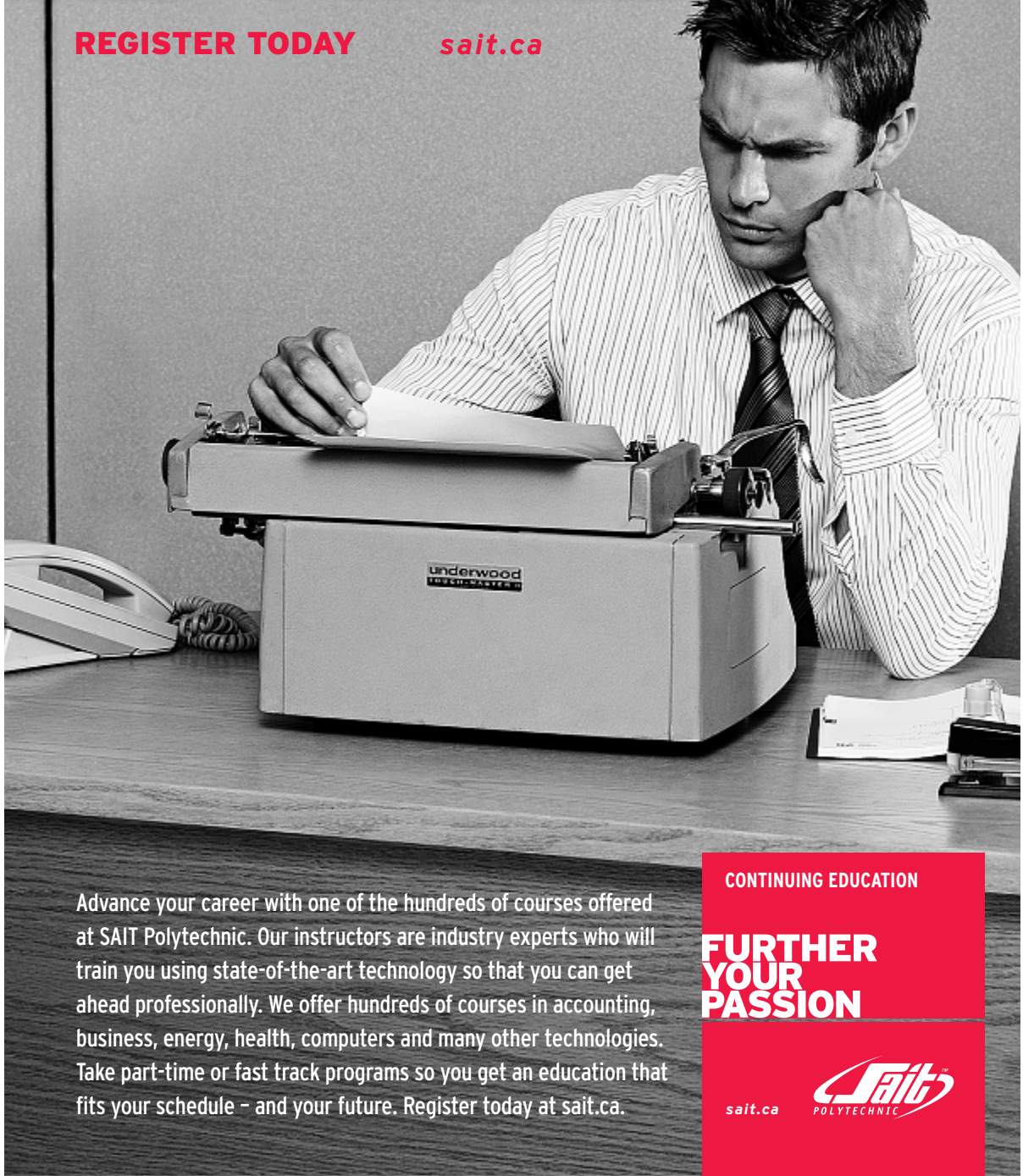
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— Calgary Herald

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