

# SOS Elms News



Newsletter No. 31, December 2017  
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## President's Report

James Wood

Year-ends are traditional times for both reflection and gazing toward the horizon. The very high level of interest in the 2015 edition of our Tree Tour booklet continued this year, and our inventory is now very low. Early next year we will be doing a second print run of 3000 copies. We had another successful yard sale this year (see p. 4) Next year we will be joining with other organizations for a group yard sale at more central location where larger crowds (and increased sales) might be expected. We look forward to our members for continued generous donation of sale items.

Our membership has slowly declined over recent years. There are several reasons for this. The mean age of our members is creeping higher both because we are losing older members due to inevitable life events and because we are not attracting the younger generations. This phenomenon is not peculiar to SOS Elms. Many other community organizations are experiencing the same dwindling. One factor in our case is that younger families are buying homes in areas with no American Elms. Current work by Ifeanyi Chiedo, a grad student in the University of

Saskatchewan School of Environment and Sustainability, to whom we provided some financial support and technical advice, shows American Elms and other large mature trees are to be found almost exclusively in Nutana, City Park and other older more central neighbourhoods. I think it is fair to suspect the majority of Saskatonians living outside Circle Drive could not identify an American Elm with confidence.

This brings me to our name, 'SOS Elms Coalition'. It is not reasonable to expect people to identify with our cause if they are unable to visualize an American Elm. It is time to seriously consider rebranding our organization, choosing a new name which better reflects our interest in the whole urban forest, not just the elms in the forest. What do you think? Should we keep our old name, or should we change it? If so, what name would you suggest? Please forward your suggestions to us, either by phone to any of your board members (see list on p. 4), by email to our website, [soselms@soselms.org](mailto:soselms@soselms.org), or by mail to our above address. Much more on this in the months ahead

There are new and emerging threats to Saskatoon trees, particularly from Emerald Ash Borer and Ash Dieback Disease, both potentially more devastating than Dutch Elm Disease. Members might like an opportunity to get up to speed on the biology behind these diseases. Please let us know if you would be interested in a workshop on the diseases threatening the Saskatoon urban forest. Other on-going threats to the urban forest include infill construction in both residential and non-residential areas where mature trees, mainly privately owned, but sometimes publicly owned, may be damaged or removed.

Urban forests also face concerns relating to long-term global consequences of climate warming. One of our board members, Linda Moskalyk, has become involved with international mitigation efforts on this front. She would be pleased to give information or workshops to anyone interested to learn more on this topic,

SOS Elms has always supported the Meewasin Valley Authority (MVA) and have lauded its efforts to protect and manage the natural resources and beauty of our river valley. However, this year we were shocked when, even though facing budget cut-backs, they spent some \$600,000 on an "improvement" to a 500 metre section of the MVA Trail along Spadina Cr. E., removing about a third of the natural woodland in the process (see article on p. 6).

SOS Elms is at a critical point in its history. Either we adapt to the realities of our changing circumstances or we will inevitably wither away. We need the engagement of our members and would welcome your suggestions about how you would like to contribute. We need to attract the next generation of tree enthusiasts to become involved. If there is a special way you would like to be more involved, please be in touch. The future provides an opportunity for us to revitalize SOS Elms.

I want to thank the members of the board and others who have worked hard during the past year to maintain the vitality of SOS Elms and its programs. A special thanks to Robert White, a long-time member and supporter of SOS Elms. He has been a valuable board member since 2014, but, for personal reasons, found it necessary to resign this year.

### **The Saskatoon Tree Tour Booklet**

...continues to be very popular with the public. I have been supplying it to our current cooperating distributors: The Better Good, McNally Robinson Booksellers, The Western Development Museum Gift Shop, Turning the Tide Bookstore, Scoles Fine Arts Gallery, Wild Birds Unlimited, and Steep Hill Food Co-op. In the past two years I collected over \$1250 in donations for SOS Elms for the booklet at these locations. We have only 50 copies on hand, so I was pleased to learn that an updated version of the booklet will be re-printed early in 2018.

Karen Weingeist

## **2017 Saskatoon Urban Forestry Update**

Department of Urban Forestry and Pest Management, City of Saskatoon

In the spring of 2017 there was a noticeable increase in the number of trees defoliated as a result of the current cycle of native forest tent caterpillars. After most trees impacted by forest tent caterpillar were re-leafing in the early summer, it became clear that **cottony ash psyllid** susceptible trees were showing signs of more significant decline city-wide. Urban Forestry initiated a city-wide canopy assessment to collect data and determine the extent of tree decline.

Urban Forestry calculated there were 1,000 trees that met criteria for removal. It is expected that there will be additional deterioration of psyllid susceptible trees in 2018 and potentially an even larger number of trees will need to be removed and replaced in future years.

A trial program of insecticide injections before bud break in spring 2017 was planned in the central Business Improvement Districts (BIDS) to determine whether these insecticide injections might be an effective way to reduce or slow down the expected tree loss. Results of this trial indicate that injecting trees that were already in decline was not effective as many of the injected trees continued to rapidly decline. In addition to the streetscape trees in the BIDS, relatively healthy trees in residential neighbourhoods surrounding the downtown were injected in a broader trial using two insecticides and a blind solution. Initial data from the trees in this trial indicated that one insecticide trialed is associated with decreased numbers of adult psyllids; however, the negative impacts to other beneficial insects and the damage caused to the trees by drilling holes for insecticide application outweigh the anticipated long-term benefit of injecting trees. Parks will continue to collect data from this trial and continue canopy assessments and egg counts.

Beyond the injectable insecticides, there are some other treatment options available. Amongst the registered products to treat psyllids, permethrin is reported as an effective treatment for controlling the insect when applied at the right time. The use of insecticidal soap has also had some anecdotal effects. Psyllids

are very mobile (referred to as tree lice) and insect infestations are assumed to impact both public and private trees so it would be very difficult to attain significant control in the long run where the susceptible trees are spread out. For these reasons a broader application of these products across the city was not recommended; individual home owners who wish to treat trees on their private property do have the option to do so.

City Council approved a recommendation of tree removal and replacement to mitigate the tree loss from psyllids. The plan includes removing 1,000 trees that have been identified in 2017. In 2018, 400 of these tree removal sites would then be replanted with stock from the nursery. The remaining removal sites would be replaced in 2019.

The rapid deterioration of psyllid susceptible trees in Saskatoon is not unlike the experience in other prairie cities including Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer, and Grand Prairie. Although attempts to control psyllids through the use of insecticides were initiated in each of these cities, there continued to be substantial loss. Drought was also associated with the loss of trees, making it difficult to determine the effects of psyllids alone. The need to plant a wide variety of hardy, drought tolerant trees is very important to building resilience in the urban forest. With the possibility of another insect pest, the Emerald ash borer (EAB) on the horizon (Winnipeg has recently reported their first confirmed case of EAB) the initiative to replace trees may be an opportunity to diversify the urban forest.

An Urban Forestry Management Plan will be initiated in 2018. The City of Saskatoon has many policies, programs, initiatives and regulations related to trees, but is in need of a comprehensive, long term vision and strategic direction for protecting and enhancing the urban forest. This initiative is intended to consider all aspects of the City's urban forest and part of this process will include gathering feedback from various stakeholders.

Rod Burghardt, the Parks Division Entomologist, reported there was no Emerald ash borer found and no reports of European elm scale. A population of Forest tent caterpillar continued in 2017, causing typical (temporary) defoliation and prompting numerous calls from the public.

The following are the 2016/2017 results of 30 sticky trap panels monitored from April to the end of September in Saskatoon:

	2016	2017
Native elm bark beetle <i>Hylurgopinus rufipes</i>	0	0
Smaller European elm bark beetle <i>Scolytus multistriatus</i>	5	3
Banded elm bark beetle <i>Scolytus schevyrewi</i>	811	632
Ash bark beetle <i>Hylesinus spp.</i>	498	436

There were 27 elm samples sent for testing in 2017 and from these samples there were no positive results for Dutch elm disease or Dothiorella.

### **Graduate Student Thesis on Saskatoon's Urban Forest**

Linda Moskalyk

Starting last year, SOS Elms Coalition has sponsored a grad student, Ifeanyi Chiedo, at the U of S, School of Environment and Sustainability (SENS). He is working towards an M. Sc. in Sustainable Environmental Management. He recently submitted a report: "Strategies to Strengthen Saskatoon's Urban Forest", which will be part of his thesis. It investigates the problems and challenges associated with urban forest management and searches for strategies to better manage and protect the trees. It explores the possibilities of the city working towards a protective by-law or an urban forest master plan that would have more credibility. Threats to the urban forest include development, population growth, insects, disease, and climate change.

When he first started working on this project he was not familiar with the species here in Saskatoon, nor the departmental policies and procedures of a city that are necessary in order to maintain a healthy urban forest. His project developed with the collaboration of members of

SOS Elms Coalition, the University faculty, and the City of Saskatoon's urban forest department.

The report compares areas of the city with high, medium, and low density canopy cover. It details the species that are most prevalent in each area and lists the top ten species within the city. Ifeanyi conducted surveys with residents living in the areas that he researched. He wanted to know how much they knew about their urban forest, whether they valued the trees and how concerned they were about protection. He also interviewed knowledgeable people working in government and non-governmental organizations with respect to issues related to the management of Saskatoon's urban forest. In order to find out about existing strategies he investigated what other cities are doing and whether they have tree protection by-laws in place.

The report provides ideas on improving Saskatoon's urban forest management through putting in place a protection by-law, providing better education about trees, and practicing more effective communication amongst city departments in Saskatoon at all stages of urban forestry management. One factor that stands out is the threat of climate change that needs to be taken seriously. The trees will provide mitigation in a changing climate and we need to keep our urban forest healthy and protected in order to do this.

The need for a legitimate forest protection plan that will provide legal protection for the urban forest is clear and hopefully SOS Elms Coalition can use some of the information in this report to further lobby the City of Saskatoon for an enhanced protection plan.

### **SOS Elm Yard Sale – A New approach for 2018**

Rae Hearn

It has been our pleasure for the past nine years for Doug Mitchell and me to host the annual SOS Elms yard sale. When SOS Elms lost funding from the provincial government in 2009 it was a way to make up a bit of the difference. Amazingly enough, it has usually brought our group anywhere from \$800 to \$1,000 per year. After our sale on June 3<sup>rd</sup> this year we donated unsold items to The Stand for their sale on the following weekend. The Stand and the

Saskatchewan Eco Network (SEN) co-hosted a Garage Sale and BBQ in the parking lot at St. Joseph's Parish on the corner of Broadway and 8th St. East. The Stand Community Organizing Centre supports the collective efforts of people and groups working towards social, environmental, and economic justice here in Treaty 6 Territory and beyond. Doug and I discussed with them the possibility of SOS Elms joining this larger sale with other like-minded groups, to increase sales and provide networking opportunities. We approached our SOS Elms board and received their approval to begin this process in 2018. Doug and I will be happy to continue our involvement and hope that our membership will be supportive of this initiative, with continued donations of items for the sale.

### **Kiss your ash goodbye!**



### **Emerald Ash Borer Arrives in Winnipeg**

Manitoba Sustainable Development advises the emerald ash borer (EAB) has been found in Winnipeg this year for the first time. This highly destructive forest-pest is a wood-boring beetle that has been found in Quebec, Ontario, and the eastern United States. The EAB attacks and kills all species of ash trees, and is most commonly spread through the movement of firewood.

Help prevent the spread of EAB:

- don't move firewood,
- burn firewood where it has been purchased,
- plant a variety of tree species to increase diversity,
- learn how to identify an ash tree
- learn how to identify the signs and symptoms of EAB.

from: Manitoba government news bulletin and CBC news

## Update on the RSBBA and adjacent Afforestation Areas

Julia Adamson

In last year's SOS Elms news (see [http://www.soselms.org/SOS\\_Elms\\_News\\_2016\\_final.pdf](http://www.soselms.org/SOS_Elms_News_2016_final.pdf)) Robert White provided a history and update on the Richard St. Barbe Baker Afforestation Area (RSBBAA), including my involvement in starting a stewards group in 2015 to advocate for and care for the area. It is important that we continue to increase awareness of urban forests in our community, particularly the ecological importance of these afforestation areas as the city grows.

The three afforestation areas (see map p. 6) have now received urban addresses, and have moved from the *South West Sector* plan, a "light industrial" employment sector, to Saskatoon's **Blairmore sector plan, a** -neighbourhood residential plan. This should mean that the afforestation areas receive timely attention as the Blairmore sector is further ahead on the long range planning scheme and urban planning addresses green space for light industrial areas differently than green space for neighbourhood sectors. Afforestation areas fit in with residential zoning much better than with industrial zoning. "The purpose of the Green Infrastructure is to develop an integrated approach to planning for and maintaining a sustainable, biodiverse city by considering natural and supportive areas as part of an ecological system" (City of Saskatoon). Public engagement will further the future of this residential neighbourhoods mission. Will your voice be heard?

Go to <https://stbarbebaker.wordpress.com/>

Note: the "George Genereux" Urban Regional Park (the NW section of the Afforestation Areas) needs a new name as the moniker George Genereux is now used for a pocket park in Willow Grove. The afforestation area between the Off Leash Recreation Area, and the Civic Operations Centre [COC] was not included in the 1979 naming (but was a part of the preservation process of 1972). Technically, two names for afforestation areas are needed, though all the afforestation area east of Highway 7 through to the COC can be generally referred to as the Richard St. Barbe Baker Afforestation Area Complex. SOS Elms is welcome to submit

suggestions for appropriate names for the city to consider.

Kudos to the City of Saskatoon for following up on the community clean-up initiatives held in 2015 and 2016! The prompt attention the afforestation areas received when the city was alerted to illegal trespass and dumping was handled very efficiently and was greatly appreciated. Three smaller community clean-ups occurred this year, taking advantage of the provincial "black gold" program to recycle 60 tires free of charge. The Meewasin Valley Authority (MVA) spring community cleanup occurred at the RSBBA, and the Off Leash Recreation Area had a clean-up which found historical dumping. No clean-ups have occurred to date at the "George Genereux" area west of Highway 7.

Thank you goes out to the Saskatoon Police and Air Force One for patrolling the afforestation areas. Fines were levied over the last year, and the incidence of 4x4, snowmobile, and ATV traffic rampaging through the afforestation areas has declined appreciably. The due diligence of the police combined with strategically placed Jersey barriers have resulted in a better environment for recreational use, wildlife, wetlands, and woodlands in the afforestation areas.

The MVA took care of invasive species, eradicating the "Leafy Spurge" *Euphorbia esula* from the afforestation areas and the "Purple Loosestrife" *Lythrum salicaria* which was found just west of RSBBA, in the West Swale. Please keep your eyes open for invasive species, and alert the MVA. Saskatchewan Environment also has a 24 hour hotline: Turn in Poachers and Environmental Violators (TIP) (800) 667 7561. If you notice wildlife or environmental resource violations, including illegal dumping and driving in a wetlands area please call. Those who provide information to TIPS leading to a conviction could be eligible for a reward of up to \$2,000.

What do forests do for us, and perhaps more importantly, what do we do for our forests?

"...today it is the duty of every thinking being to live, and to serve not only his own day and generation, but also generations unborn by helping to restore and maintain the green glory of the forests of the earth."

*Richard St. Barbe Baker*



*New*

Blairmore  
Civic Addresses South West Sector Afforestation Areas



View of natural woodland along the river North of the CPR train bridge. Photo by Cliff Speer.

**SOS Elms Coalition Inc. Board of Directors**

President: Jim Wood	373-6007
Treasurer: Cliff Speer	653-5693
Secretary: Richard Kerbes	653-4209
Membership: Rae Hearn	244-3082
Member at large: Linda Moskalyk	250-0442
Member at large: Doug Mitchell	244-3082
Member at large: Ken Turner	373-1170

This newsletter edited by Richard Kerbes and Kathy Meeres

**Calling All Volunteers**



In 2018, SOS Elms will again have a display at Gardenscape in March and at the Living Green Expo in April. We will again be asking for volunteers to help staff our booth, and your participation will be much appreciated. Please contact any board member (see list p. 6).

**Meewasin Trail – Pavement Expands, Woodland Shrinks**

Richard Kerbes

April 10, 2017, was a black day for trees in Saskatoon, and a shocking personal reminder of the need for continuous vigilance in defending our urban forest. That morning a contractor hired by the Meewasin Valley Authority (MVA) began a massive removal of trees and a scarification of the woodland habitat on the east side of the MVA Trail, along Spadina Crescent East from Duke to Queen Streets. It was a shocking surprise to people who value the natural qualities of the MVA Trail system, to me in particular because I live on that block. My partner and I have lived here since 1991. A key reason why we moved here was its beautiful canopy of lovely mature American Elms over our street, enhanced by the natural green buffer of

Manitoba maple woodland in front of our house between the MVA Trail and the South Saskatchewan River.

No advance warning had been given to local residents by MVA, except, a few days earlier we had received a mailbox flyer. It stated that “up-grading” of this section of the MVA Trail was to be done this summer, following a previously approved and funded plan. Immediate removal of adjacent natural woodland was being done so that the upper river bank could be widened and levelled with fill to accommodate a re-build of the paved Trail. The MVA flyer stated that this was necessary in order to safely accommodate the current and future traffic of pedestrians, runners and cyclists. Based on a survey done for the MVA, the Trail’s existing width of 2 metres had to be doubled, to 4 metres. Further, the bank had to be widened enough to eventually allow expansion to 6 metres, based on their Trail Study which predicted that use would exceed 300 people per hour by 2043! Having lived on this section of the Trail for 25 years, I have seen its use increase and agree it needed some widening, but not a doubling, and certainly not a tripling based on hypothetical use projections. The work proceeded quickly – within a week most of the mature maples and other large trees had been cut down, branches, small trees and bushes trampled and shredded (see my photos below) .

My partner and I immediately wrote to Mayor Clarke and the CEO of MVA expressing our concern and questioning what was happening. Not seeing or reading anything in the news about the damage being done to the Trail woodland, and failing to persuade my SOS Elms board to publicly protest, I decided to go directly to the media as a concerned citizen. On April 12. I phoned and emailed my concerns and photos about the tree removal to CBC, CTV, StarPhoenix, Shaw Cable, etc. Finally, CTV interviewed me on the Trail, in front of our house, on April 15, and ran it on local CTV news at 6 PM that evening. <http://saskatoon.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=1101914>

On April 17 a Saskatoon StarPhoenix reporter and photographer interviewed me on the Trail, and the story ran the next day, with my photo on both Page 1 and 2! Over 20 readers commented on the CBC web site, most of them expressing concern that so many trees had been

removed. My interview with CBC radio ran on April 18, and again many readers commented, most of them supportive to my view. <http://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/cutting-down-trees-to-widen-meewasin-trail-concerns>  
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/meewasin-train-upgrade-saskatoon-1.4073300>

My going to the media seemed to stimulate more widespread interest in what was happening on the Trail. I talked with my local City Park Community Association, the Saskatoon Nature Society (SNS), and a number of concerned individuals. On May 1st the SNS delivered a strong, but diplomatic letter to the CEO and to the Director of the Board of MVA, pointing to the significant loss of wildlife habitat and asking why mandated environmental reviews had not been done.

At the 8 May meeting of the city’s Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services I spoke on behalf of SOS Elms, along with SOS Elms member Jake Buhler as an individual, protesting the severe cutback that MVA had done to the natural forest along the Trail. We got an official reply from the Committee as follows

“The Committee resolved:

1. That the information be received;
2. That the Administration work with SOS Elms Coalition, MVA, The Saskatoon Nature Society, Environmental and Corporate Initiatives, Urban Forestry, Office of the Treaty Commissioner, and any other applicable stakeholders for any future trail developments; and
3. That future reports with respect to trail widening include specific impact with respect to natural habitat.”

Mayor Clarke, who also attended that 8 May meeting, had confirmed these same statements earlier.

Unfortunately, MVA’S “up-grading” project for that 500 metre long section of the Trail between Duke and Queen was too far gone for anything to be done to reduce its ecological impact. However, at least we have a commitment that future Trail developments will get proper review and assessment before proceeding.

Although stressful, this MVA Trail experience in 2017 has been beneficial in reminding me, and

the SOS Elms Board, that the Urban Forest is more than just the trees that have been deliberately planted and cared for by citizens and civic workers. It includes the naturally growing trees and their associated vegetation complexes which are remnants of natural undisturbed habitats that have been preserved by the city in parts of the river valley and special parks. It also includes the Afforestation Areas (see p. 5), which had been planted and then let go, evolving to essentially wild habitats.



## ***YES! I WANT TO JOIN SOS ELMS!***

<http://www.soselms.org>

- \$10.00 Annual membership per household
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Donation
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Total - (tax receipt will be mailed to you)  
 Money order or cheque enclosed  
 (Payable to SOS Elms Coalition)
- Yes! I wish to help out as a volunteer

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_



Mail to:  
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