

# SOS Elms News

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SOS Elms Coalition, P.O. Box 1313, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 3N9

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## Past President's Message

by Judith Benson

Thank you, members, for your patience! It's been a year since our last SOS Elms News. You have no doubt been awestruck at our American Elms' beauty this autumn. I don't remember ever seeing the leaves so golden. The welcome rain enabled them to remain on the trees longer than usual. Because their colours did not change simultaneously, gold leaves contrasted with the dark green; the golden leaves fell and then the slower elms turned colour. The September sun shining through the canopy elms along Clarence Avenue and in the Caswell area were especially glorious. Did you all probably stake out your favourite showy elm locations to admire and photograph, as I did?

Dutch Elm Disease (DED) continues to threaten elms in Saskatchewan communities, but thankfully it has not yet been detected in Saskatoon. Nevertheless, SOS Elms has special concern for trees in three key areas of Saskatoon:

1. The Gathercole Elms still stand proud, not only as landmarks but as memorials to the old heritage building,

which was torn down in early summer. SOS Elms has addressed City Council several times on this issue. In response to our presentations last winter and spring the following measures were taken: plywood boxes built around the two main elms to cushion trunks from falling debris, an order

to direct demolition away from elms, and some mulching to protect surface roots from soil impaction by heavy machinery and vehicles. No one contacted us to say, "Good idea. We'll see what we can do" but at least some effort was made.

The following is from my most recent presentation to City Council, on September 20th, 2004:

*"I hope you have taken time from your busy lives to admire the golden glory that the City's American Elms are displaying this month. We city dwellers do not have to travel any farther than the Riverbank and older neighbourhoods to enjoy autumn's colours at their finest. This morning I photographed some of our elm-lined streets as the sun shone through the elm canopies. They were truly cathedral-like in their brilliance.*

*The forthcoming Gathercole property investors and developers must be persuaded to appreciate as assets the eight major mature elms that grow at the north end of that property. One way to accomplish this objective is for Council to include in the terms of reference within imminent sales contracts that it will give priority to those investors and developers who include the preservation of these elms in their offers to purchase. In the City's most recent tree inventory, these elms*

received the top rating for tree health by Urban Forestry Technician, Spencer Rossmo, and a collective appraised value of \$100,000.

*I realize that I am not able to ask questions of Council at this time, but perhaps one of you could give me an answer later this week. To date, have City planners advised perspective investors that these elms will add monetary and respectable landmark value, as well as all of the other gifts that mature trees provide us (erosion control, beauty, shade with insulating properties, shade for future residents and visitors who will use the grounds, wildlife habitat, heritage character and publicity, noise absorption, exhaust absorption, etc.)?*

*Those planners and builders who integrate the elms into the total design of the park and buildings will be applauded for their insight. If the attitude prevails that no measure of control is necessary, that developers can do whatever they wish with this valuable resource, then the City of Saskatoon will lose credibility. Is it better for our citizens, especially our children, to see the City treat our mature trees with disregard, or with reverence?*

*Also, in order to impress developers and investors, the City must showcase the Gathercole elms. Sensitive pruning is what these elms require in order to highlight their splendor and prove attractive to developers.*

*Pruning needs to be done promptly while these elms are in full leaf and most impressive. During the (past) years of decision-making and site planning, the trees have been neglected. Now is the time to catch up on their care, and to act with intelligence and sensitivity. The site is presently unkempt. Erosion occurs where grass has been bulldozed away. Even spreading of the piles of unused wood chip*

*mulch over the area will contribute to its appearance in the short term.*

*If Council includes the above contract condition in its sales agreements and invests in the grooming of the trees and their surroundings, I can see its efforts generating local pride. A public celebration is preferable to a public demonstration.*

At the MVA meeting on October 1st, board member and MLA, Peter Prebble, moved that a three metre space be left for some green landscaping between the sidewalk and proposed storefronts that will line the new street(s) leading down to the hotel and condos which will be built along the riverbank where the Gathercole building used to stand. No one even seconded the motion to allow discussion, let alone a vote! Sidewalks will abut storefronts. Mr. Prebble is cognizant of the value of trees and green landscaping. I thanked him for his efforts.

The South Downtown architectural plan calls for gardens on the rooftops of the proposed buildings. The architect's rationale for this is that these expenditures will allow for an attractive aerial view of the site. In other words, an exclusive segment of society will be offered green amidst the cement on the rooftops! The MVA board is made up of four people each from the university, government (including Mayor Atchison) and MVA. Of the twelve only Peter Prebble was willing to speak in favour of quality green space.

Members - please write letters to the StarPhoenix to voice your support for the Gathercole Elms. Mine appeared on October 7th, 2004. You may also write to Mr. Rob Tomriama, architect at City Hall. Tell him how much those trees mean to you.

2. The superintendent of Woodlawn Cemetery, Ron Laturas, reports that the

112 elms along Next of Kin Memorial Avenue, the National Heritage Site, received deep watering once each week during the summer unless Mother Nature provided water on scheduled watering days. The Heritage Site received a City grant last year for removal and replacement of fifteen elms. Eighty-five hazard elms were removed elsewhere in the cemetery, but not replaced. He says that, overall, the elms have further deteriorated this year. Four hundred fifty elms are designated as hazardous (at least 40% dead), but at present funding is not in place for their removal. If not removed by April 2005, they will be prime targets for DED. Mr. Larnas has applied for capital budget funds for tree removal. His request is at the Departmental level now, and he foresees its going to City Council in early December. Many of the hazard trees have veteran memorial plaques from loved ones. I wonder if those loved ones are aware of the state of their own memorial trees.

We are not the only group concerned with these trees. Jill Thompson, Chairperson of the U of S Plant Disease Sub-council contacted me for names of persons to contact regarding the state of the Woodlawn elms.

**3.** Regarding Patterson Gardens, in August, Professor Tom Hughes, Head of U of S Plant Sciences, recommended that it be put on the back burner. He advised me that until the University has a plan for preserving and conserving this resource, it would be pointless for SOS Elms to make any kind of contribution. Dr. Hughes plans to retire in June 2005. A few weeks later Tom Ward, another Plant Sciences professor, phoned me. His message was that SOS Elm's inquiries have opened up new possibilities for Patterson Gardens. To his knowledge the Gardens was not a

closed issue. He advised me that the University hired a summer student to prune, re-label and do a general clean up. The Gardens contributed to the success of a university tour during the summer. We discussed possible ways SOS Elms and the Saskatoon Nature Society could contribute. The most appealing suggestion was to help develop a picnic area in a space created after removal of diseased birch trees. Memorial trees could be planted around this picnic area. He said that the widening of Preston Avenue has not disturbed the Gardens property.

In other news, a highlight of our activities this year was our guided Second Annual Tree Tour of Saskatoon in June. We have updated our self-guiding booklet which goes with the Tree Tour. It is available at Libraries, MVA, Dutch Growers, Steephill Food Co-op and the Forestry Farm. At our Board meeting on October 20th Saskatoon Centennial Committee Chair, Lenore Swystun, joined us. We discussed how our ideas fit into plans by other organizations to celebrate the 100th birthdays of Saskatchewan in 2005 and Saskatoon in 2006. It was a productive meeting, thanks to Lenore's energy and inspiration. If you have ideas for celebrating our urban forest during these Centennial years, please phone me at 653-4339.

Thank you to our loyal members and Saskatchewan Environment for your continued support. Special thanks to Irene and Kerry Moffat for their many years of support for SOS Elms and for hosting of our Board meetings in their home. Irene has resigned from the Board but will continue to assist our activities where she can.

We are proud to have no DED in Saskatoon. Other areas have had outbreaks, but we are blessed with relatively healthy trees. Owners of American elms:

please note that pruning, by a qualified arbourist, can be done from now to April next year. Since the cankerworm population has remained low in Saskatoon, tree banding was not recommended this year.

### **Saskatchewan Dutch Elm Disease Association (SDEDA) Report**

By Sheri O'Shaunessy, Executive Director

DED awareness and education has continued to be one of the SDEDA's main focuses in 2004. The SDEDA strives to reach those that are still very unaware of the dangers and seriousness of DED.

In conjunction with SOS Elms and Saskatchewan Environment, the SDEDA has been running a "Symptoms" and a "Firewood" video on CTV, Global, and CBC television throughout the province. We have also concentrated more effort with paid advertising of these videos in the Regina area, which has always been a "hot spot" for DED. Participation in trade shows has also been a top priority; with attendance at the UMASS trade show, the Moose Jaw Exhibition, and the Integrated Vegetation Management Associations Field Day and seminar.

The **Schools Plant Legacies In Trees (SPLIT)** program began as a pilot project in the fall of 2003 and culminated with two very successful planting events at Westmount and Bishop Roborecki Schools in Saskatoon. The SDEDA is currently working on expanding this program around the province and is in the process of developing partnerships with several corporations and industry to make this a reality.

The SDEDA has also been working with SaskPower, to assist them in the development of a revised pruning course that will allow them to meet the requirements of the training recommended in the revised DED regulations. I have been providing presentations to SaskPower to help promote awareness and education about DED and management within the province.

Progress continues to be made in 2004 to move closer to a completion of the revised DED regulations. The regulations are ready to go to the Legislative Instruments Committee. We are very pleased with the progress that is being made and are anticipating the completion of the regulations in the near future. The SDEDA is currently working on an implementation strategy for the regulations to ensure continued advancement in the management of DED within Saskatchewan.

The goals for 2005 are to continue to promote education and awareness of Dutch Elm Disease around the province of Saskatchewan, strive to increase funding for educational programs (e.g. SPLIT), and to build a more comprehensive DED program that would assist smaller communities across the province.

### **SPLIT (Schools Plant Legacy in Trees)**

by Michelle Chartier

This spring SOS Elms participated in an exciting new tree planting initiative called SPLIT (Schools Plant Legacy in Trees). The partners in this initiative included the City of Saskatoon, the Saskatchewan Forestry Association, Saskatchewan Dutch Elm Disease Association, the Kiwanis Club, and both Westmount Community School and Bishop Roborecki Elementary School. Funding for the project came from various

sources including grants from the Saskatoon Foundation, Toyota Evergreen, Saskatchewan Outdoor Environmental Education Association, and the City of Saskatoon Cash Grant. There were many donations including \$1000 from SOS Elms and numerous in-kind donations from local businesses.

SPLIT started with organized visits to both schools by speakers presenting forestry related topics such as tree insects and diseases, soils, climate change, and landscape design. In April students from both schools attended an interactive trade show. Various organizations set up displays and demonstrations at Vic Rempel Yards. Students had the opportunity to see tree work, pruning/climbing demonstrations, participate in interactive forestry displays, and tour the Civic greenhouse operation. One of the highlights for many students was taking a spruce seedling home. The day was a great success!

Students from the Kiwanis Builders Club at both schools took on the leadership role in the project. They also assisted with the development of the landscape plan for their respective school and all the students at each school took part in the planting day activities. This planting day included a formal program with speeches from various dignitaries followed by a large tree spade planting demonstration. After the formalities the students and community volunteers rolled up their sleeves to participate in the hard work of planting the trees and shrubs. When all the planting was complete there was a barbeque to celebrate the successful event.

If you want to see the results of SPLIT 2004 visit the west side of Westmount School or Parc Canada adjacent to Bishop Roborecki School where the planting took place. You'll appreciate the result of the students' hard

work. SPLIT will truly leave a planting legacy for future generations to enjoy.

In the end we hope the SPLIT project, by involving young people, will result in the whole community enjoying the benefits of trees and that their participation will increase the awareness of the importance of trees and our environment. Thanks to SOS Elms for being an important part of this worthwhile project!

### **Paddy Tutty, SOS Elms Board Member, performs at True North Wild and Free**

"It was a hand-clapping, eye-popping, foot-stomping night of boreal entertainment in Saskatoon's Broadway Theatre on November 11, 2004. It was also a time to rejoice, resolve and get ready for action, as 400 enthusiastic participants became part of True North Wild and Free of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) Boreal Forest Campaign. CPAWS Saskatchewan was pleased to have a full house, and overwhelmed by the level of enthusiasm for our cause beyond the music, pictures and words of those on stage. If we can infect everyone in Saskatchewan with the same enthusiasm we had in the theatre, the boreal in Saskatchewan will be safe forever.

"James Raffan put the best of his academic and entertainment background to the fore and worked magic with the crowd. He was ably assisted by authors Candace Savage, Laurel Archer and Ken Carriere, participants from the Boreal Rendezvous canoe trip on the Churchill River and Courtney Milne who shared a story about his trip down the Bonnet Plume in the Yukon. Another highlight of the evening was a set by Paddy Tutty, a Saskatoon based folk singer who matched the mood perfectly with her songs,

each of which had a connection to the forest."

Congratulations to Paddy for her generous and talented support to this important cause! Paddy also performed at SOS Elms' "*Backyard to Boreal Forest*" Conference in 1994. That conference was SOS Elms' first major event, and it brought together people and groups concerned for both the urban and the northern forest.

Boreal forest, which occupies about two thirds of Saskatchewan, wraps around the entire northern hemisphere like a green cloak. Overall it makes up almost 11 per cent of the Earth's total surface, and it is the world's biggest terrestrial ecosystem. Like the tropical rain forest of the southern hemisphere, the boreal forest is being rapidly depleted, threatening the long-term health and stability of our planet's biosphere.

For more information on how you can help the boreal forest please check out the [CPAWS Saskatchewan web site](#).

### **Tree Planter wins Nobel Peace Prize**

(from Globe and Mail, Oct. 9th, 2004)

On October 8th Wangari Maathai became the first African woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize. She is also the first person in the 103-year history of the Nobel Prize to be recognized specifically for environmental activism. Ms. Maathai has been directly or indirectly responsible for the planting of about 30 million trees across Africa, as she struggles to break the vicious cycle of deforestation and poverty that plagues rural areas.