

SOS Elms News



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SOS Elms Coalition, 1618 9th Ave. N, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 3A1
Web Site: www.soselms.org

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President's Report

James Wood

As 2018 draws to a close, it is time for SOS Elms to look back at the high points of the year. I am delighted to report that our membership has been growing! We now have a total of 80 paid-up members, which is an increase of over 30% since this time last year. Sadly, this month Robin Morrall, one of our long-time supportive members, passed away. A plant pathologist, he also served on our board in the early years.

In March we printed 3000 copies of the second edition of our Saskatoon Tree Tour guide, which remains very popular with the public. It helps to fill our mandate to promote citizen interest and appreciation of both individual trees and the whole urban forest, which in turn encourages the public to help protect our forest canopy.

In January I spoke in City Council Chambers about the importance of trees and suggested the city consider enacting a bylaw, similar to that which some cities have, which would place some restrictions on the removal of larger trees from private property. My presentation was accurately reported in the StarPhoenix on January 16, 2018. The matter sparked some

public feedback and was referred to Parks Branch for further consideration.

In March we participated in Gardenscape and in April, Living Green Expo. These events provide us with an opportunity to talk directly to people about trees and our organization. Although selling memberships is of secondary importance, this year at Gardenscape we were very successful, setting a new record for renewals and new members. Many thanks to members for helping to staff our booth – we are counting on you to be there again next year.

In May at our AGM Linda Moskalyk became our Vice-President, and Tom Gode joined our board as a Director. Ken Turner had resigned from our Board earlier this year. Ken was one of our original members, and we thank him for serving on the board. Jeff Boone, the City of Saskatoon's entomologist, spoke about current threats to the urban forest, with special reference to the Cottony Ash Psyllid which has had a devastating effect on our ash tree population.

A major concern for us this year has been the removal of Spruce and American elm trees during the development of the Gordie Howe Sports complex. This touches on the much larger issue of urban design and development. We met with city officials to discuss our concerns over the inevitable conflicting needs between development and tree protection, both public and private. See the articles below (p. 3 and 6).

Like most small non-profit corporations, SOS Elms Coalition struggles to find sufficient members and volunteers to keep our organization vibrant and growing. We need enthusiastic, energetic and committed people to re-energize our organization and take on more

of the challenges facing the urban forest in the coming years.

We are looking for new people to join our board. We are presently short-handed in a few key areas including publicity and social media. Our long serving, dedicated board members need to share some of their responsibilities to spread the load, so we can be more effective overall.

If any of our members are interested in being more actively involved in our “day to day” tasks, please contact me (jkwood306@gmail.com or 306-373-6007). Add your energy and enthusiasm to our small, but dedicated volunteer force working in the interests of a healthy, sustainable urban forest.

Urban Forestry Conference

Linda Moskalyk
Vice President
SOS Elms Coalition

The International Urban Forestry Conference was held in Vancouver in September this year. It was combined with the Canadian Urban Forestry Conference and the annual International Society of Arboriculture training. The theme was ‘The Urban Forest - Diverse in Nature’. Sometimes we don’t think about the diversity of nature within cities, but trees and green space are essential in our lives where we work and play.

As a board member for the SOS Elms Coalition I was lucky enough to be chosen to attend the conference. The messages seemed to be the same as international speakers talked about protecting trees in their regions: the two main challenges that face our urban forests are urbanization and climate change.

The city of Melbourne, Australia is already making big changes to the way they manage their trees and green spaces. The record-setting temperatures and lack of water have spurred more tree planting initiatives to cool the city. They have developed new strategies by collaborating with the universities to come up with solutions for effective vegetation cover. The city of New Westminster, BC won an award for planning excellence. Recognizing a loss of tree canopy, they began to see the trees as a capital asset. Public/private partnerships were developed. All city departments (parks,

engineering, planning, etc.) were brought together and committed to tree protection and development of a by-law. In Japan a program called “Trees Like Me” to involve children and connect people with trees was initiated. Partly a therapy and rehabilitation program it’s also an educational tool. This led to funding from hospitals and social services for tree planting and conservation. They recognized how trees are connected to health! Vancouver has a lofty goal -‘to have the world’s most spectacular urban forest’. They plan on planting 150,000 more trees, and have regulations against removal of private trees.

Community food forests are being planted in many cities to provide both eco-benefits and healthy local food. On the downside, cities all over the world are losing tree canopy cover due to rising populations and development. Many presenters talked about managing green infrastructure as a municipal asset.

Some of the most important things that I took away from the conference for SOS Elms and our goals:

- Communication – It is important to network with other organizations and individuals in order to collaborate and find solutions. We can’t underestimate the power of partnerships.
- Climate change will be the biggest challenge for urban forests. Water shortages leading to drought and invasive insects emphasize the importance of diversifying our tree species and maintaining a progressive tree maintenance program for survival.
- City strategies and policies need to recognize the importance of trees before any development begins.
- “Food Forests” are going to be an important part of Urban Forest planning.
- Politics and economics often mislead the public. We must stand up for the trees!
- Individual citizens can help shape and protect our green spaces, through advocacy and education.
- Trees are often the last things to be considered for budgeting. The urban forest needs to be a big part of asset management strategies.
- We need urban forestry policies on the provincial level as well as city level.

This information is vital and inspiring for us - since the conference our SOS Elms board has been collaborating with other groups and City departments in order to make positive change for the trees. Andrew Roberts from the City of Saskatoon is a planner within the Special Use Facilities department. He attended one of our meetings and we had a productive discussion about tree protection during development. He has committed to keeping in touch with our organization as new projects emerge. We plan on inviting more guests to meetings in order to develop relationships and voice our concerns for tree issues. Being aware of the changes that are happening due to a warming climate is part of education and awareness campaigns focused on new insects and diseases that are now able to survive in western Canada. An example is the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) that has decimated trees in the east and has now been discovered in Winnipeg. Previously it was thought that the EAB could not survive in western Canada, but now it seems that it can. The City of Winnipeg may have to remove as many as 11,000 ash trees due to the EAB. This could be our story in Saskatoon in the near future. We remain in touch with the Saskatoon Urban Forestry department about protective action where we can help.

At the Conference I also learned about the importance of stewardship and the significance of action by residents. Our politicians and civic leaders need to know that we are advocates for the trees. Actions by our membership will make a difference. Phone, write letters, use social media and get involved when there are concerns. If members have connections or know someone influential, this could be of great help for education or to help prevent unnecessary destruction of trees during development projects.

Citizen science can be valuable. Get educated about climate change and learn how that will affect our urban forest. We may need to convince neighbours to help water city trees as well as their own private trees in times of drought. This summer was a good example of how trees suffer from lack of moisture.

Our members can be influential through networking with other organizations, schools, churches, or political groups. There may be opportunities within these groups to speak up about the urban forest. We are all like puzzle

pieces. Even if we are the smallest piece - if that piece is missing the puzzle won't get finished. We need to get more people involved, no matter what their expertise. Theirs could be the small contribution that might be the missing puzzle piece.

Urban Forest Challenges in Saskatoon

Linda Moskalyk

There are some positive steps being taken within the City of Saskatoon to ensure that our urban forest remains intact and healthy.

- The Saskatoon Urban Forestry department is developing a new tree inventory system that will provide eco-benefit analysis for every address. It will be capable of telling the residents, e.g. how the trees affect the value of the home and its heating and cooling costs. Every tree species will be plotted on a map.
- The City of Saskatoon climate action plan includes a 'Green Infrastructure Strategy' that is being implemented through community consultations. An SOS Elms representative attended the first consultation meeting. We will continue to be involved with this city initiative in urban tree management, development, land use, storm water management, natural resources, and education to connect residents to nature. This initiative has already recognized the need for a comprehensive urban forestry management plan.

There are many challenges for the Urban Forest as the city grows. SOS Elms has to keep up on the front lines of development in order to have a voice for the trees and to ensure that they are considered throughout the planning stages of any development project.

Past, present and future infill/expansion projects are being closely monitored by SOS Elms. For example, the Gordie Howe Sports Complex Expansion project has been a big concern. In order to facilitate space for all of the sports fields and buildings the original plan called for the removal of 215 mature American Elms and spruce trees, plus a naturalized aspen bluff. Although the expansion plans were very

advanced before we could attend consultation meetings, we lobbied city planners along with other citizens and the Urban Forestry department, and the expansion plan was revised slightly. Although the large windbreak of mature spruce and other trees on the west side of the skating oval was lost, 20 large mature elms were saved from the 31 slated for removal from the south parking lot (see photo). Also plans to pave that parking lot have been scrapped,

We are concerned about a new condominium project on University Drive and protection of the trees surrounding the property. There are many in-fill housing units going up in various neighborhoods. It is important that we monitor the trees at these locations in order to track their health to ensure contractors are following the guidelines of tree protection. We are still keeping an eye on a row of American elms at the Shangri-La condominiums on 4th Ave and Queen St. This project was completed several years ago but the trees were not considered in the planning stages by permit authorities or the developer, resulting in dieback from root damage.

As a watchdog organization it is vital that we speak up for the trees. As a citizen and an SOS Elms member, please be aware of issues that affect trees. From the beautiful large mature trees in our older neighbourhoods to the new plantings in the suburbs, trees are priceless assets of Saskatoon. Contact an SOS Elms board member (see p. 7) with your concerns. Call your city councillors – let them know that our eyes on the forest!



20 of the 31 elms were saved! Photo: R. Kerbes

Collaboration

Jim Wood

Collaboration is the new buzzword. I see it mentioned everywhere from the Harvard Business Review to comments from non-profit organizations as an essential tool to keep organizations, big and small, alive and up with the times. Failing to develop links with groups and individuals with like interests is the road to isolation in silos devoid of windows for looking in at what we are up to, or out onto the real world. We at SOS Elms have discussed this at our recent board meetings. We have made a small start, meeting with Julia Adamson from the St. Barbe-Baker Afforestation and related sites, Greg Gibbons and his Rare Trees of Saskatoon Facebook Group, Andrew Roberts from City of Saskatoon Recreation and Community Development, and Michelle Chartier, Superintendent of Saskatoon Urban Forestry.

Our plan now is to continue to meet with representatives of other organizations but to do this at times other than our board meetings. We will find a site which can accommodate all those interested in attending, including our members. Look forward to invitations to these events in the New Year.



Halifax Regional Urban Forest Master Plan

Halifax NS has an excellent Regional Urban Forest Master Plan, summarized in the following video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyXDjOamDj8>

Done in an informative and entertaining way, it touches on every important reason for municipalities to honour and protect trees. We highly recommend it as a review of what we are striving to have in Saskatoon.

Thanks to Saskatoon Urban Forestry for sending us the link.

Dutch Elm Disease 2018 Provincial Update

In 2018, the Ministry of Environment continued its work to control the spread of Dutch elm disease (DED) in Saskatchewan. The program included identifying and removing DED-infected elms in eight rural zones; surveying five provincial parks; providing scientific and technical support to individuals and communities dealing with DED; enforcing DED regulations; and reviewing applications to utilize elm wood or to import elm seedlings.

This past year the ministry implemented a new buffer zone around the City of Melfort in response to severe DED pressure that was discovered in 2017 on rural properties surrounding the city. In Saskatchewan, 544 DED-infected trees were found and removed in buffer zones around eight communities – Regina, Moose Jaw, Melfort, Estevan, Indian Head, Balcarres, Wolseley and Tisdale – to help protect elms within the communities. This was a significant increase from last year, when the ministry removed 253 trees from these areas. Outside of these buffer zones, urban and rural municipalities are responsible for DED management within their jurisdictions.

Although DED continues to spread rapidly in some parts of Saskatchewan, the Town of Watrous was the only community in 2018 to experience its first confirmed DED infection. Throughout the infected zone, the disease continued to kill elm trees in farmyards and shelterbelts. Several smaller towns continue to experience significant elm loss. The affected rural area is expected to expand but, for now, the western side of the province remains free of DED.

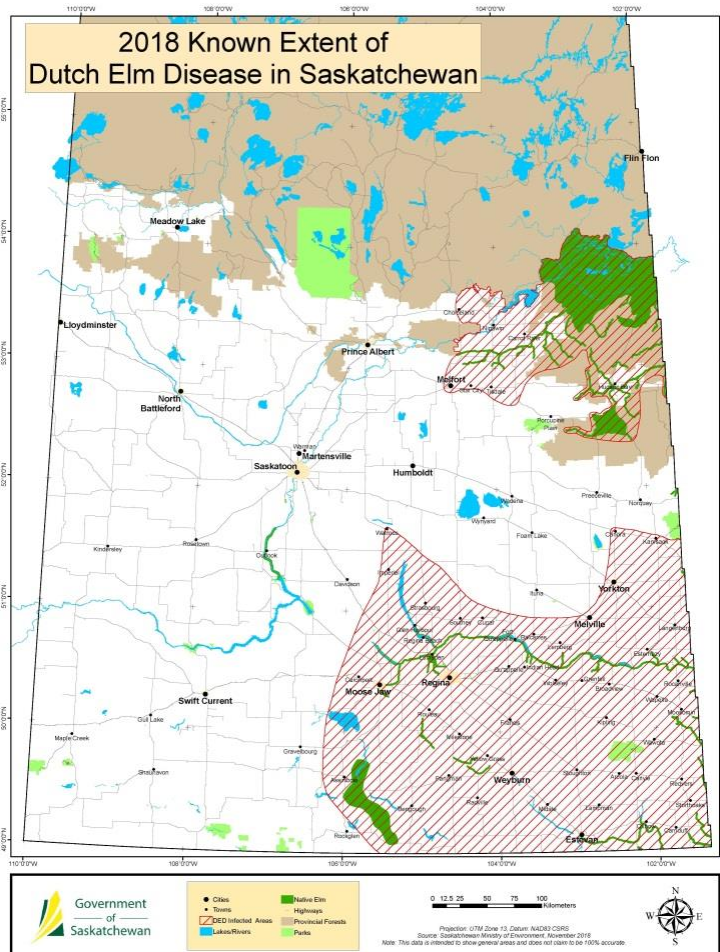
The Ministry of Environment continued to work with the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport (PCS) to manage DED within provincial parks, with Environment identifying infected trees and PCS co-ordinating tree removals. In 2018, the ministry identified 109 elms for removal within Katepwa, Echo Valley and Rowan's Ravine provincial parks, as well as the Regina Beach recreation site. Greenwater Lake Provincial Park was free of DED again this year.

The province's Crop Protection Lab continued to provide free sample testing to communities and the public. In 2018, the lab received 304

samples for testing, confirming 178 as DED. Another nine samples tested positive for Dothiorella wilt.

The Ministry of Environment encourages people to take action to prevent the spread of DED into their communities, including proper elm pruning done outside the annual ban period (April 1 – August 31) and the appropriate disposal of elm wood. It is also important to respect regulations prohibiting the transportation, sale and storage of elm firewood, and establishing standards for tree care professionals. Communities can help enforce these regulations by appointing municipal DED inspectors.

For more information about DED or other ministry programs, please contact the Ministry of Environment's general inquiry line at 1-800-567-4224, Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Urban Forestry and Urban Biological Services Update

Saskatoon Urban Forestry Department

Saskatoon continues to experience tree loss due to an infestation of cottony ash psyllids (CAP). As part of this year's CAP Response more than 1,600 City ash trees were removed. Urban Forestry also initiated a second city-wide canopy assessment in July to determine the extent of further tree decline. Data indicated that an additional 2,900 trees met the criteria for removal. Funding was approved by Council for a 2019 CAP Response Plan. Council also approved an expedited tree and stump removal option for citizens willing to pay for a more timely service than the current funding level provides for impacted trees.

Given the state of susceptible ash trees, environmental factors and the underlying threat to all ash species by the emerald ash borer, Urban Forestry continues to recommend a program of tree removal and replacement to mitigate the tree loss from psyllids. Removing and replacing dead/dying ash trees continues to be an opportunity to invest in increased diversity and a more resilient urban forest. Although the City is no longer planting black and Manchurian ash trees, it will require some time to completely phase out the production of all ash species.

The need to address future large scale tree threats was also addressed this year through a report to Council called Establishment of an Urban Forestry Reserve. The purpose of the proposed reserve was to finance the cost of responding to insect and disease infestations that threaten the City's urban forest and to control pests affecting the quality of life of citizens in Saskatoon. Initial funding for this reserve was approved with a \$150,000 contribution to the reserve in 2019.

Work on the development of an Urban Forestry Management Plan, as part of the City's Green Infrastructure Strategy, is in progress and the first engagement session took place this fall with a very good turn-out of participants. There will be more happening in 2019 and those interested can stay informed about this initiative or provide feedback on the City website at:

<https://www.saskatoon.ca/engage/green-strategy>

There were no emerald ash borer (EAB) found, although there was a close call with a bronze birch borer that was caught on an EAB trap in a green ash. There were no reported cases of European elm scale. The forest tent caterpillar (FTC) population dropped significantly from the previous year based on both call volume and casual observation. There is no formal monitoring program for FTC.

The following are the 2016-2017-2018 results of 30 sticky trap panels monitored from April to the end of September in Saskatoon:

Species	2016	2017	2018
Native elm bark beetle <i>Hylurgopinus rufipes</i>	0	0	0
Smaller European elm bark beetle <i>Scolytus multistriatus</i>	5	3	0
Banded elm bark beetle <i>Scolytus schevyrewi</i>	811	632	556
Ash bark beetle <i>Hylesinus spp.</i>	498	436	838

There were 14 elm samples sent for testing in 2018 and from these samples there were no positive results for Dutch Elm Disease or Dothiorella.

Special Trees of Saskatoon and Saskatchewan

If you are interested to learn more about special trees of Saskatoon and Saskatchewan we highly recommend that you check out:

1. **Rare Trees of Saskatoon Facebook Page**, maintained by Greg Gibbons, a resident of Saskatoon:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1119846438116835/>
2. **Saskatchewan's Special Trees Webpage**, of the Saskatchewan Forestry Association, maintained by Phil Loseth (phone 306-953-3567, Sask Forestry, Prince Albert):
<http://www.whitebirch.ca/special-trees/>

If They Can't Drink, They'll Die!

Cliff Speer

I was personally affected by the current dry year in a few different ways. Since my business and personal pursuits involve the outdoors in all seasons, the lack of snow early last winter caused problems with conducting x-c ski lessons. Summer came with its record heat and lack of rainfall. I carried on with canoeing operations on the South Saskatchewan River, but the low water level was a challenge for many paddlers. In fact, one of my rental parties had to be "rescued" about half-way into their kayaking trip, due to shallow water.

With all those distractions, I wasn't paying close enough attention to what was taking place in my own back yard. There I have three mature trees, an American Elm, a Manitoba Maple, and a Rescue Crabapple, originally planted almost on top of each other by a former home owner. All were obviously competing for scarce moisture reserves. The Elm, being in the middle, was looking the worst of the lot. Its canopy was a fraction of its normal size. What leaves that had appeared were sparse and tiny, much smaller than what I was used to seeing. It didn't improve as the summer heat and dry weather persisted unabated. I began to think it might die! That would be such a pity, as one arborist remarked to me, a few years back while pruning the two City elms in my front yard. This one was a handsome specimen and due to its close competition had grown up straight and tall in true vase-like form – the perfect type of its species!

In a minor panic, I called Michelle Chartier, Saskatoon Urban Forestry Superintendent, for advice. Her response was to put a soaker hose around the canopy drip line and leave it on low flow to let the water sink in. I followed Michelle's advice and let it run 24/7 for over two weeks. I set up another garden hose on low flow at the base of the tree.

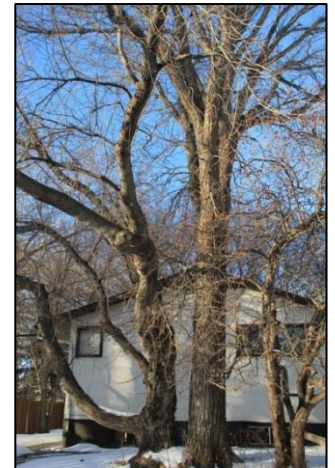
The result was astonishing and encouraging. The Elm's leaves got bigger, and some new ones may even have popped out. I was mightily relieved - the tree was looking a lot livelier - I knew it wasn't going to die after all! But I just about died when I got my utility bills! However, I had been warned by personal letter from the City that they had noticed an "unusual increase in my water consumption." They suggested that I might have a leaky toilet, and bless their hearts, even

gave me a detailed diagram and instructions on how to replace a leaky flapper valve!

I'm uneasy thinking ahead to next spring and a possible repeat of drought-like weather. A lot of City trees were looking pretty stressed towards the end of summer with a lot of dieback on twig ends and leaves browning up and dropping prematurely.

Here are a few tree care tips from Michelle when our trees need more to drink:

- Mulching the root zone with wood chips can help conserve moisture
- During drought periods set up a soaker hose **at low flow** around the canopy drip line. If the tree is competing with lawn grass for moisture, make sure the hose isn't just watering the grass
- Drought causes stress and makes trees more vulnerable to pests and diseases, so watch for dieback on branches and twig ends and keep up regular pruning of dead wood to help keep your trees unattractive to disease producing insects
- Supplemental watering during drought periods can be achieved by using downspout rain water directed onto trees
- A general rule for watering when there is no rain to saturate the tree root zone is to provide approximately 10 gallons of water for every inch of tree diameter per week



Cliff's back yard Elm squeezed in between a Manitoba Maple (L) and a Rescue Crabapple (R)

SOS Elms Coalition Inc. Board of Directors

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This newsletter edited by Richard Kerbes and Kathy Meeres

Infill Development and Protecting Tree Roots

Jake Buhler

The private developer of the infill project at 830 Main Street in Nutana deserves to be acknowledged and congratulated. He has spread 6 inches or more of wood chips/mulch between the two giant American Elm street trees (see photo). This is to mitigate compaction caused by heavy trucks that drive over the boulevard to access the building site. The City of Saskatoon apparently requires this sort of root protection, but never or rarely enforces it. A developer does not have to agree to protect roots using this method. One subcontractor told me that in five years of hauling heavy building materials, he has never seen something like this.

The City of Saskatoon does not enforce protection of roots of mature trees. Council has huge volumes of regulations (my packet from City Hall contains 25 pages).

I urge Council to review its policy. If it does not include a mitigation of harm from compaction with a clause that indicates the contractor will set down woodchips or large steel plates, the policy is spineless.

Ed. note: this is from a letter Mr. Buhler (an SOS Elms member) submitted to City Council on 28 Oct. 2018. SOS Elms continues to lobby Saskatoon authorities to increase tree root protection at infill sites.



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:
 SOS Elms Coalition
 1618 9th Ave. N,
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 S7K 3A1

NOTE: To reduce mailing costs and paper consumption, next year we plan to send our Newsletter in digital form to members with email addresses. Members for whom we have no email address will continue to get a paper copy in regular mail.

- CHECK HERE if you want to receive your newsletter by regular mail.