

SOS Elms News

Newsletter No. 12, Fall 2000

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



President's Message - Brad Mitchell

Hello everyone. I hope the summer has been good to all of you. Richard Kerbes resigned as president in July and I have taken over on an interim basis until October. If you are interested and able to fill this position please step forward as the Coalition cannot survive without someone at the helm.

So far this year, Saskatoon has remained free of Dutch elm disease. Although several trees were tested for possible infection, all the results came back negative. However, new infections have been discovered in Kamsack (2), Fort Qu'Appelle (3), Pasqua Lake (previously disease free), and many trees in Estevan. The good news is that Davidson has not reported any new infections, as it was the nearest threat to Saskatoon.

SOS Elms has undertaken several new projects over the summer, most significantly the Home Owner Alerts published in the Saskatoon Sun (see Glenn Gustafson's article). Judging from the increasing amount of phone messages we've received, the public has taken notice. A grant from the Saskatoon Foundation will allow us to print and distribute a more detailed Elm Care Guide to the older neighborhoods where elms are most densely concentrated. In addition to this, Susan Kaminskyj has arranged a DED Seminar with Mike Allen in October and Stephanie Laverty produced

and distributed a tree-banding pamphlet reminding homeowners to remove their bands this summer.

So far we have managed to remain free from DED in Saskatoon for another year. By remaining active in the community and continuing to raise public awareness in the process, we hope to keep Saskatoon DED free for many years to come.

Past President's Message - Richard Kerbes

In June I turned over the helm to Brad Mitchell, who has been doing a great job this summer as interim President, keeping our activities on track. This fall Brad will be leaving the country for a year or more, so we will need a new President to take over, at least until Brad comes back. If you are interested, please speak up now!

My two years as President of SOS Elms has been both challenging and rewarding in our fight against Dutch Elm Disease (DED), and in keeping the American Elm alive and well in Saskatchewan. My sincere thanks go to our financial sponsors and to our Board and other members who have worked hard to make our coalition a success.

I continue to represent SOS Elms at board meetings of the Saskatchewan Dutch Elm Disease Association (SDEDA). In cooperation with Saskatchewan

Environment and Resource Management (SERM), SDEDA is effectively fighting DED in the cities, towns, and many villages of Saskatchewan. Elena Schacherl, who recently moved to Calgary, has done an excellent job for the past 5 years as the first Provincial DED Administrator. Her place has been taken by Glenn Gustafson, who became the new Executive Director of the SDEDA in April. Glenn is well qualified for his new post, and has been doing a great job for SDEDA. Although we regret losing Glenn from our SOS Elms Board, fortunately he continues to be a dedicated member, involved in activities such as this newsletter.

Highlights of our activities in the year 2000 include the distribution of our video, on the tragic story of how DED destroyed most of the elms in Great Falls, Montana, and the Community Tree Celebration, which took place at the Saskatoon Forestry Farm on June 11 2000. This summer we initiated a major first step in our DED Action Plan for Saskatoon. SOS Elms believes that a proactive action plan is the most effective and efficient way to preserve our urban forest. After discussions with City and SDEDA officials, this year we have decided to focus on improving the care of privately owned elms in Saskatoon. Our "Home Action to Prevent Dutch Elm Disease in Saskatoon" project consists of full-page newspaper "Elm Owner's Alerts", and a three-page fold-out "Elm Owner's Guide".

The province and the city have greatly improved their DED control programs, thanks in part to earlier lobbying efforts by SOS Elms. Nevertheless, SOS Elms must remain strong and vigilant - a citizens' voice for our urban forests.

New Urban Forest Diversification Program is Underway

The Tree Canada Foundation is pleased to have acquired major funding to develop a program that will replace trees killed by or at risk from Dutch elm disease. Thirty-five communities will be receiving trees this fall in a program called the Saskatchewan Urban Forest Diversification Program.

As the one aim of the program is to diversify the tree cover in Saskatchewan communities, Tree Canada will distribute 23 different tree types, representing a variety of sizes, colours, blossoms, and forms. A more diverse urban forest will be less susceptible to insect and disease infestations. Most of the trees will be forwarded to the PFRA Shelterbelt Centre at Indian Head, where the participating communities will pick them up on September 22, 25 and 26th and plant them out shortly thereafter.

The major sponsor for the program is Trans Canada Pipeline, which has pipelines through the south of the province, as well as Home Hardware and Sobey's. The Tree Canada Foundation is a non-profit organization similar to TREEmendous, but national in scope. Murray Little with the Tree Canada Foundation is coordinating this particular program out of Prince Albert, in cooperation with the SDEDA.

Community Tree Celebration Wet but Fun! - Michelle Chartier

On June 11th SOS Elms, the City's Forestry Section, and a number of local businesses organized the first annual Community Tree Celebration. Canada Trust 'Friends of the Environment', Treemendous, and the City of Saskatoon were the major sponsors. The objective of the event was to plan a day of interesting, fun tree-related activities at the

Forestry Farm Park where the public could join us to learn about trees and the benefits provided by our urban forest.

Our planning committee, which included Richard Kerbes, Judith Benson and Bronco Skorupan from SOS Elms, organized activities to appeal to all ages. As with all outdoor events the weather played a crucial role in attendance and unfortunately our event landed on one of the coolest, wettest days of spring. Thankfully the hardy tree spirits could not be chilled and we still had a good turn out. We moved displays into the auditorium and did some improvising.

Our SOS Elms tree mascot made its debut with the help of Judith Benson and Judy Johns and was a hit. Employees from the City, Superpro Tree Experts, and Sawyers came together to provide pruning and climbing demonstrations and those who came out to the event were not disappointed. We hope the groundwork for an annual celebration has been put in place and look forward to a second annual event in 2001.

