EPC MEETING FEBRUARY 15, 2005

Greetings your worship, and members of the committee.

Thank you for allowing me to appear today. Unfortunately SOS was not invited to appear at the Property and Planning Standing Committee meeting on January 31st. We understand the vendor of the lands in question was invited, and able to convince the committee to reject the Planning Department's recommendation. I would like to now provide some additional information in order for this committee to make an informed decision about this altered, recommendation before you today.

I am not a tree hugger but an interest group entrepreneur and have worked for a volunteer organization since 2002. My job is to achieve my organization's mandate rather than profit. Our aim is to preserve, protect and preserve the natural and historical environment of the Seine River in Winnipeg. Prior to SOS I was a licensed Realtor with Re/max for almost 5 years and am now resuming my studies and doing a Masters of City Planning at the University of Manitoba.

In essence SOS works for the city of Winnipeg by protecting, preserving and enhancing the Seine River Greenway. The city owns over 300 acres of parkland and public preserve within the Greenway. SOS is now a trusted fixture and institution in the city. In 2004 SOS received 4 awards including the Mayor's volunteer service award and the first Canadian Environmental Award in Manitoba.

I am appearing today on behalf of several board members who are unable to attend at this time, I would therefore like to ask the chair to indulge me when I go over ten minutes, as I am consolidating several presentations, in order to avoid repetition and waste the committee's time.

1) I have to ask all of you, why are we here today? It is over 400 days since all the funding was committed to protect the final 14.9 acres of Bois-des-esprits. This is when SOS laid down its burden and rejoiced that the city would have a new, Natural 81-acre forest park. The hugs, tears and champagne were long ago. We are here today, simply because the City failed to finalize the deal. This is a crime since it had been ongoing for a year and a half by then and could not have caught anyone off guard. This is missing in the report…which I can understand because it is like asking a student who has failed to write his own report card – and it may not dwell on the negative.

2) Save Our Seine has volunteered thousands of hours at a great sacrifice to other pressing and important projects and activities. We have meager resources and cannot do everything, however, it is fair to say that the saving of 81-acres of pristine, forest within the city of Winnipeg is worth every effort and every investment. SOS's board and volunteers are tired and spent. It has required a tremendous effort to save the entire forest. As anyone who has tried to squeeze money from the province of Manitoba would agree, it is not easy. POSTCARDS

3) The value of the forest, in a current cash amount, is an investment of over $3 Million dollars. It is undoubtedly the most important project that SOS has ever committed itself to. It is a major investment by our community and must therefore be protected.

4) But why save this forest in the first place? This 'ecological jewel' is prized because of its pristine condition. It is a rare mix of sensitive and disappearing habitats including, burr oak forest, river-bottom forest, ancient ox-bow wetlands and tall grass prairie. This mix of habitats attracts some of the most diverse wildlife species found in out city. This is why the community, SOS, Robert Bateman, the City and the Province has worked for three years to protect it from development. If it is protected, and can remain pristine for future generations of citizens, it will be admired and envied by all. But it must withstand our poor decisions and us.

5) So the deal did not finalize and a crack appeared in the city's deal with Ladco. The vendor was able to exploit this opportunity and attach new conditions. The scary consequence of not accepting this condition is that the land is already zoned multi-family and can be bulldozed and replaced with 150 condos.

6) Ladco apparently rationalizes these new conditions as to protect the forest – this is dead wrong. This is absolutely false and cannot be supported. The frustrated provincial partners, negotiating with Ladco, tell SOS that at least we can still save the forest. For those who can understand what these conditions mean we consider this a Pyrrhic victory – a victory as good as a loss.

7) In their wisdom and with an understanding of basic trail design related to sensitive areas, the city actually bought an extra (and costly) strip of land along the eastern edge, now in the no-trail-zone, specifically for a trail. This additional six-figure cost will now be denied its intended use. This is absurd. It must be mentioned that at one point the 30-meters, extends through the forest, across the river and onto the opposite bank in St. Vital.

8) SOS asserts, as studies show, that the land is A-Quality habitat. The report uses a confusing definition of categories. I must argue the categorizing of the forest into I, II, and III, land, as described in the report. These are horribly misleading and create an impression of less worth and less sensitivity than the rest of the forest. The final 15 acres are labeled category III land, described as....I would like to read an email from PPD to the then City Forester pressing him to categorize the forest as 'must save' and 'should save' parcels...

9) The essence of the dispute relating to this land acquisition is the new conditions that have been attached to the deal. In order to buy, the city must accept the 30-meter no-trail-zone for 5 years on eastern western edge of Ladco's development. Why a zone in the first place? What is the true rationale for this? What purpose or more importantly, whose purpose would this serve? Certainly not to protect the substantial

investment made by two levels of government and the community? Then who and what? This has never been explained or justified.

10) Accepting this condition sets a precedent that a developer can dictate to society what can and cannot be done on public parks space. This is just wrong and scares me to think of where this can lead us. Please remember this condition does not apply only to the final 15 acres but to all the parkland currently owned by the city! This is about 10-acres worth $650,000.

11) What is truly confusing is Ladco's radical change in position when it comes to trails. Are you aware that Ladco offered to build, at their expense, a trail ¾ of which is in their new 30-meter zone? In can be said that it is hypocritical. Please look at the handouts. – read website quote & discuss bridge quote.

12) SOS has been asked what is wrong with 10 acres that cannot have a trail? What is wrong with waiting 5 years? Let me explain the two main reasons

    - First is safety. The forest is under tremendous pressure today – even before Ladco completes the 800 homes for thousands of citizens who will naturally be drawn to the forest. These trails are not designed with safety or the anticipated volumes in mind. To be fair they were mostly designed by deer and further used by humans. We are not powerless to correct this situation, we can design alternative routes or retire unsafe ones. We can avoid trail conflicts with cyclists and walkers; we can make paths that do not exclude people because of ability either in a stroller or a wheelchair. We can make the trails feel safe and be safe. Accepting this condition robs citizens of this ability.

    - Secondly is the protection of habitat. A stressor emanates from a source (house or even a trail) and penetrates through the edge habitat into the natural habitat. Stressors are artificial lights or noise, vibrations, lawn mower fumes, cats and dogs, scents, odours, lack of vegetation etc. These all impact or stress a habitat. Having a trail *within* this 'zone of disturbance' is best. The alternative is to further extend this disturbance deeper into the narrow forest. This is a basic explanation but ecological processes and proper design can

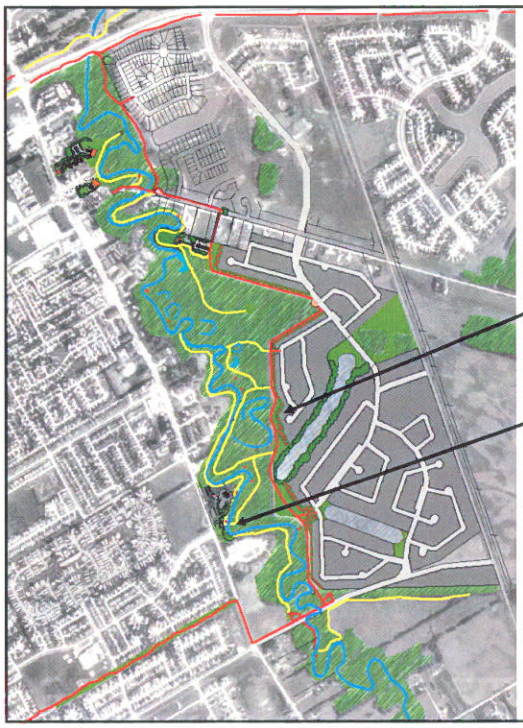
The fact is that to preserve society's $3 Million investment we must design the trails to lessen the impacts and pressure on the forest. The forest cannot handle the thousands of new home residents moving to the Royalwood Phase II and wanting to enjoy the forest. They must have safe trails designed and furnished before they move into Royalwood Phase II en masse.

13) I must now correct myself. Earlier I said that SOS worked for the city caring for city-owned land. This incorrect. SOS works for the citizens of Winnipeg and, even more accurately, for future citizens of Winnipeg. I would like to read a card sent to

SOS by a citizen, one of our bosses. It is was inspired by an article she read in the newspaper describing the final 15-acres....How do I explain what the current situation is to her?

14) The question that must be asked is why then such a condition? I have been searching for such an answer. The best I can come up with is that Mr. Borger does not want a tail near 60 properties that back onto the Bois-des-esprits. Perhaps he is assuming that this would hamper the premium price these lots would command? Perhaps he is forgetting why they would be so desirable? Because they *are* backing onto the Bois-des-esprits! Are we being told to waste a multi-million dollar investment from two levels of government and the community for hundreds of thousands of future citizens, so that Mr. Borger can believe he may squeeze a small percentage extra of profit on 60 lots? This can't be so.

15) Lastly the city has put us in this awkward situation and with a man who is not interested in honouring the original deal. I can only hope for outcome. I implore the CEO of the City to call the CEO of Ladco, apologize for the bungling of the transaction and to ask for him to withdraw these severe and harmful conditions and finalize the deal. After all this is the man who is building Winnipeg's biggest subdivision Waverly West, surely he would like to maintain a trustworthy and honourable relationship with the City.



Bois des Esprits Park Plan

Concept Document 2001

- Red indicates both the proposed asphalt trails and existing ones (such as Ladco's Royalwood Phase I).
- Yellow signifies other material (gravel or woodchip).
- Extra land purchased to go around oxbow wetlands via eastern edge.
- Street layout & ponds as proposed by GPP (*not Ladco*).
- A footbridge was proposed instead of the Southglen vehicle crossing.
- Note trail goes *past Shorehill intersection* and links up with the future Warde Avenue extension, The trail leading west (lower left) is the Golden Way to St. Mary's Ave past schools etc.
- *Dated 2000*



Ladco's proposed Trail Route at their expense

- Red lines signify the forest perimeter, not a trail.
- **AREA 1** box is city owned access from John Bruce into the forest.
- White lines show Ladco's trail *mostly backing on the edge of properties* except for when it skirts around the final 14.9 acre triangle. (**AREA 2** box)
- **AREA 3** box is also SOS's position. It is clearly in Ladco's new, *no-trail-zone*. Area 2 trail fragments the final 15 acres (labeled developer owned).
- **AREA 5** box also shows their trail backing on their development, again contradicting the own new *no-trail-zone* condition.
- **30 meters extends across the river!**

Dated September 24th 2004.



Trails create stressors that impact and degrade the surrounding habitat quality

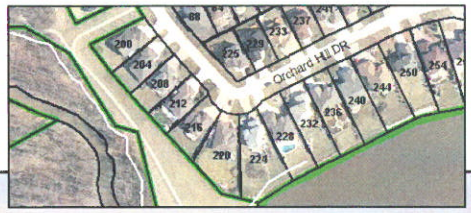
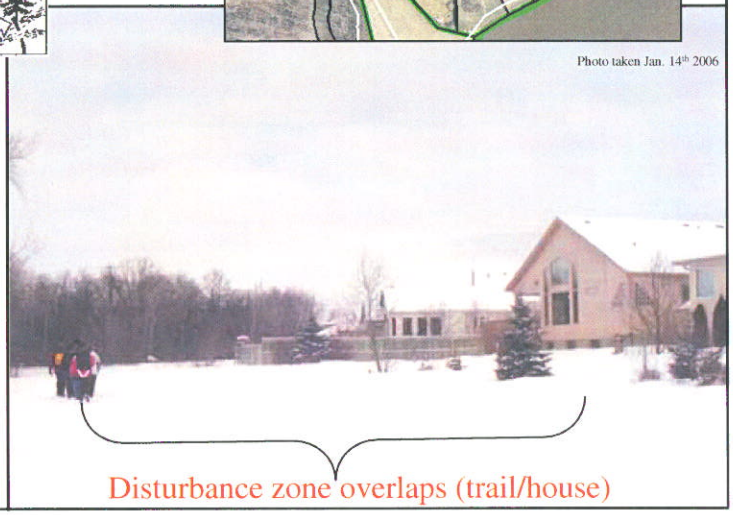


Photo taken Jan. 14th 2006



Disturbance zone overlaps (trail/house)

Royalwood Phase I, a trail built by Ladco.

This trail seems to not bother anyone and is not in the natural area. The residents have opted to not put up a fence but some trees are planted.







Bulldozing 2 acres of forest and re-channeling the river (below)



Mr. Borger wrote a letter to area residents stating, *"The SOS group claims that the proposed crossing will will have a serious impact on the river habitat. Our professional consultants do not agree."*