



President's Message

by Philip van Wassenauer

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of our members a prosperous and happy New Year. The year 2003 was busy for anybody involved with the urban forest. As most of you will know by now, Ontario is now host to two of the more aggressive invasive exotic insects that impact on trees in North America. These are of course the Asian Long Horned Beetle (ALB) and the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). The EAB was discovered in Windsor in July 2002 and the ALB was discovered in Toronto and Vaughan in September 2003. Both these insects are significant threats to our urban and commercial forests and their financial impact may well be measured in the billions. We had a very successful AGM in December that highlighted these insect infestations and the implications for a need for a more coordinated proactive national approach to urban forest management in Canada. The Council urges you to keep abreast of the latest information pertaining to these invaders and to support the control efforts by obeying all regulations and quarantines. Information can be found on the website of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) at:
www.inspection.gc.ca/english/plaveg/for/fore.shtml

I wish to thank all the directors for their continued commitment to the Council and for their many hours of volunteer efforts. Janet McKay has been very helpful in getting our website up and running and to help produce the electronic newsletter. Jack Radecki has carried on the tasks of executive director and is helping us to stay on course. Of course there have been contributions from all the other directors as well.

It is with some sadness that we see Andy Kenney leaving the council as a director. In recognition of his efforts to advance the field of Urban Forestry in Canada, the Council presented Dr. Kenney with the Conservation Award at the AGM held on December 4th, 2003. I know you will all join me in thanking him for his many years of service and leadership to the Council. We wish him well in all his other efforts. If there is anyone interested in joining the council as a director, please let us know.

While the year has been somewhat quiet, the directors are all volunteers and must work within the limits of the time that they can reasonably commit. Within those limits we continue to carry out the mission statement and to focus on organizing educational venues and working in cooperation with other groups where we can.

Some of our previous work has carried on into this year. The results of the breakout sessions at the 5th Annual Canadian Urban Forest Conference, combined with input from other urban foresters across Canada, resulted in the inclusion of Urban Forestry in the new National Forest Strategy released in May 2003. I think that we should all be proud of this achievement and our involvement in it. The challenge now is to see the new Urban Forest objective get implemented!! This can certainly be a topic for further work for the Council.

The proceedings for the conference have been compiled and the CD's have been sent to all the conference participants. This is also an OUFC effort that has been going on in the background. Special thanks to Andy, Janet and Kim Geddes for helping me get this project completed. Extra copies are available for a minimal charge of \$5.00 to cover shipping. We look forward to the announcement of the next conference.

After the conference Andy Kenney established a national electronic networking group called the Canadian Urban Forest Network (CANUFNET). To help continue this worthy effort, the council will be assuming the costs of running the network in 2004. This small investment of approximately \$200 will allow open discussion of urban forestry issues amongst Canadian urban forest practitioners from across the country. Andy Kenney will continue to oversee and moderate the electronic discussions.

In 2003 we put on several smaller seminars and worked with the Ontario Forestry Association on several initiatives associated with their Envirothon Program. Several of the directors have represented the Council at a variety of educational events. The constitution was updated to reflect the new name of the organization and the revised mission statement. Should the Council decide to incorporate as a not for profit organization the constitution is now ready.

In 2004 we will be focusing our efforts on Heritage Trees. We began this discussion last year and made contacts with other groups interested in helping with projects. The topic of Heritage Trees will be highlighted at our annual general meeting this fall. We are also going to be working with our colleague and past director Bill Morsink, on developing The Urban Forest Scrapbook. This book will take a comprehensive look at where we came from and where we are headed in the field of Urban Forestry in Canada.

I encourage you all to find ways to help the directors carry on the good work of the Council. I look forward to a busy and successful year to come!! Please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,
Philip van Wassenauer