

opinion

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Mother Nature sez

Hello dearies! How many train derailments is that now in lovely British Columbia? I'm losing count. The last one, with cars leaking ethylene glycol into the Thompson river, was a doozy.



And you know what they call erosion:
"The Great Terrain Robbery."



Although your train companies appear to have special needs, it's not human error in every last case. I hate to admit it, but sometimes your mother gets into the act. In this case, the train was hit by a mudslide triggered by heavy rains.



I know, dearies. The disaster was bad enough without adding groan-worthy wordplay. But I've always believed puns are much better to give than receive.



Logging trees the right move

CRITICS FILLING THE AUDITORIUM at Killarney Community Centre Monday night denounced the parks board's plans for Queen Elizabeth Park as a "chainsaw massacre." But look beyond the hysteria and you will find a modest effort to deal with years of neglect and restore a number of view corridors to the city's highest point of land.

Those accusing the board of interfering with nature fail to accept that what we see in that park is almost completely man-made, and in some cases poorly made at that. The area was clear cut in the late 1800s to expose a stone quarry which was used for decades to provide building materials. In 1949 the city developed a plan for an arboretum and park on the site. But it was never well executed.

What we have now is a testament to poor forestry practices which persisted over the years in part because successive gutless park boards were swayed by a politically correct lobby of misguided tree huggers.

Many of the conifers in the park were planted in plantation-style blocks and never properly thinned or pruned. Any serious gardener will tell you those activities are essential to the health of their enterprise.

As the staff report recommending the latest plan points out: "the crowded conditions resulted in poor tree form with sparse foliage due to lack of light, except at the top of the trees. Some of the pines suffer from needle blight, and others have broken leaders and crooked poor form due to storm damage."

The report also points out lessons learned

allen garr

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from the enormous amount of destruction in Stanley Park following storms a couple of winters ago. There, an over mature forest with an overabundance of vulnerable hemlocks took a hit. Parks board staff now concludes: "As we learned from the Stanley Park experience, it is important that we manage the trees to ensure healthy development and reduce the risk to the public."

Parks board staffers were practically joyful at the possibilities the storm provided for restoring the Stanley Park forest to health. They particularly noted that the dense canopy that existed before the storm allowed no understorey of vegetation which provides habitat for birds and small mammals.

As poorly designed and neglected as those plantings in Queen Elizabeth Park were, they

nonetheless continued to grow in height and blocked three view corridors to the north and northwest. It was always the intention of the city to maintain those corridors as a fundamental feature of the park. Council affirmed that as policy in 1990.

In the last attempt to deal with the obstructed corridors a few months ago, the parks board actually considered the possibility of a privately developed and operated observation tower in the park. Reason prevailed. But, along with the public criticism of the tower at the time, the public again expressed a desire to have view corridors towards the North Shore mountains and Howe Sound.

The board's decision Monday night is a modest proposal. About 70 trees will be removed. One third of those are diseased or damaged. They represent fewer than one per cent of the trees in the park. Few are of any significant stature.

Board staff will plant two trees for each one removed. Those planted in the area of view corridors will be mostly ornamental species that will not attain a height to block any views. But they will provide that missing understorey now cut out by the overcrowded original plantings. And that will create more bird and mammal habitat, not less.

The tree removal is planned for this summer. Those with nesting birds will be left until the young are fledged. New planting will take place in the fall and winter. I suspect years from now folks enjoying the park and admiring the views will wonder what all the fuss was about.

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