

RBG Receives Coroner's Recommendations

After 7 days of hearings into the "Severe Head Injury" death of 10 year-old Tyler Cooper, who was killed while on a school trip to the nature trails at the Royal Botanical Gardens on November 5th, 2004, Coroner Dr. Darryl Wolski released the following recommendations;

Recommendation #1

Immediately identify all 31 km of formal trails and location of these trails using the existing grid system.

Recommendation #2

RBG immediately hire a staff member or contract a certified arborist/forester who is qualified in the area of tree risk assessment to identify trees that pose imminent risk on the identified trail system and abate them.

Recommendation #3

Where abatement of risk cannot be performed immediately, pending abatement of that risk, the trail in question shall be closed to users of the trail.

Reason: The jury wishes to expedite the completion due to the immediate safety concerns.

Timeline: December 31, 2005.

Recommendation #4

The Royal Botanical Gardens must create a comprehensive map of the Royal Botanical Gardens' trail system using the GPS system (to an accuracy of 3 metres) to identify each public trail of the 31 km trail system.

Recommendation #5

All trails to be clearly marked in one tenth kilometer increments (signage to identify trail and distance).

Reason: To provide an accurate basis to identify the trails and to assist the public in pinpointing a location.

Timeline: Base mapping by December 31st, 2005

Trail markers by June 30th, 2006

Recommendation #6

In consultation with Mr. Bruce (Ian Bruce, President/Chief Arborist of Bruce Tree Expert Company Limited) and any other experts at his discretion, finalize an appropriate Tree Risk Assessment policy that incorporates the following recommendations made in his report.

- a) A tree risk management system should be integral to the RBF risk management programme.
- b) All RBG staff should be trained in the basic principles of risk identification and management.
- c) Responsibility for administration of a tree risk management programme should be delegated to a specific RBG staff member.

- d) RBG staff responsible for tree risk management should be adequately trained and qualified.
- e) Training in tree risk management must include the following components:
 - adequate training in tree structure inspection, recognition of signs and frequency of inspection.
 - Documentation
 - Action options based on the rating.
 - Follow-up.

Recommendation #7

Final Tree Assessment Policy shall include:

- a) An appendix listing all identified trails and the location of those trails
- b) A classification of each identified trail according to frequency of use (active vs. passive) and nature of use (e.g. Education)
- c) Based on classification of each identified trail, a schedule for inspection for tree risk assessment purposes
- d) For those trails with active use or use for education purposes, a scheduled tree risk assessment shall be conducted at least two times per year.
- e) For those trails less frequently used, a scheduled tree risk assessment shall be conducted at least one time per year.
- f) Standardized form to record inspection and information regarding location of trees requiring follow-up, and nature of risk that must be abated.
- g) Standardized form to record abatement strategy and record of work completed and date upon which work completed.
- h) Establish a clear chain of command with the lines of communication and reporting structure specifically identified.
- i) Tree risk assessment policy shall be subject to review every 3 years.

Reason: To prevent another incident

Timeline: Acceptance by the Board by March 31, 2006

Recommendation #8

The Trail Watch programme shall continue. The Trail Watch Manual shall be updated and an Appendix listing all identified trails and their location shall be appended.

Timeline: Updated Trail Watch Manual shall be completed by January 31st, 2006.

Recommendation #9

The education mission of the RBG shall be continued.

Recommendation #10

Outdoor programs shall include a detailed site map indicating the route(s) and/or site location(s). Maps showing alternate route(s) and/or site(s) to be used as necessary.

Reason: Provides a line of communication between Nature Interpretive staff and Maintenance staff.

Timeline: October 31, 2005

Recommendation #11

An inspection of the trails and areas to be used for education programs shall be carried out each morning by a staff member of the Nature Interpretive Centre. The staff member should also consider the weather as per the policy.

Recommendation #12

Prepare a written weather policy in consultation with a qualified expert to ensure properly trained individuals determine whether a trip proceeds based on current and previous weather.

Recommendation #13

A day book shall be maintained by the staff member of the Interpretive Center giving the Date and time of trail inspection. It should also identify the weather, the program, number of people and a list of RBG volunteers.

Reason: Mitigation of risks associated with outdoors.

Timeline: October 15, 2005

Recommendation #14

Nature Interpretive staff shall be trained in first aid.

Timeline: June 30, 2005

Recommendation #15

All education tours and pre-tour inspections are to be conducted with cell phones.

Timeline: October 15th, 2005

Recommendation #16

Funding partners of the RBG should consider offering additional financial assistance to Abate the immediate concerns and provide ongoing financial commitment to maintain a Tree risk assessment policy.

Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation #17

RBG shall complete an accurate and detailed organization chart.

Timeline: March 31, 2006

Recommendation #18

The RBG and other like organizations promote greater public awareness of the risks associated with trees.