

# of Progress

Having been successful in 1971 in getting Council to drop all plans for road development in the Mill Creek ravine, and its status as a park reaffirmed, Ald. Una Evans attempted, in March 1972, to get a motion halting construction in the MacKinnon ravine approved. (The status

By the time Ald. Evans tried to halt work on the MacKinnon freeway (alias the Jasper freeway) public opinion was changing: a concern for the environment, urban amenities, and the impending fuel crisis have all had their effect. Council agreed to a temporary halt, and called for

days following.

The new transportation policy paper published in June 1972 does not mention freeways. It does however make use of major arterial roads, e.g. divided, 8-lane, below grade, limited access roads that differ from freeways in name only.

The Utilities committee solicited the opinions of the public toward the policy paper. Of course all such briefs had to be submitted with 25 copies, nonetheless, more than 60 briefs were received. The majority of the briefs were hostile to further freeway building.

The transportation plan resulting from the policy paper skirts around the future of the MacKinnon Ravine. It recommends upgrading public transport, not excluding rapid transit, the development of major arterial routes, ring roads, and further consultation with the citizens. This study along with all the other studies commissioned since 1963 (including the METS) have cost the city over \$5 million.

Part of the logic for constructing the MacKinnon freeway rested with the 1963 population projections for Edmonton West, which indicated it to be a high growth area. Most recent projections, however, show it to have the second lowest growth potential of any area in the city. In fact, the city appears to be losing population to the suburbs. In view of the overall population stabilizing in Edmonton West, it is hard to justify continuing with the Jasper freeway.

The province's share of road construction by the city is up to 75 percent, providing the road meets freeway standards. In addition, the province gives Edmonton an annual flat grant for road construction of \$4.5 million. This money can only be used for construction, not land or property acquisition, or developing a rapid transit line. In fact the city's transportation future depends on the Provincial Cabinet. The pro-freeway lobby there is vigorously led by the Highways Minister.

The city has attempted unsuccessfully to persuade the Province to make the transportation grant available to the city, and allow the city to spend it in any way the city sees fit, with no time condition attached. This would permit the city to direct funds to rapid transit development. But the province is unwilling to change its policy.

## Chamber in forefront

Foremost among those who would still like to see the METS plan implemented in the city, starting with the MacKinnon Ravine, is the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce (the University of Alberta is a member of this organization).

Is this just the innocuous desire to sell a little bit of cement, or do they see the MacKinnon freeway as just the first stage of a much more ambitious development?

Consider what will happen if traffic is funnelled into the ravine, presumably in largish numbers, as freeways tend to be used to capacity as soon as they are built. More people decide to use their cars when they think the going will be easy, thus quickly cancelling any advantage the freeway creates. The traffic thus engendered will soon require the enlarging of the River Road at the expense of the Victoria Park Golf Course. Eventually the traffic will bottleneck at

the 105 St. bridge, and unable to disperse southward or northward on the present street system, the build up of traffic would soon force the city to reverse its stand on the Mill Creek Ravine and allow it to become a freeway. The James MacDonald bridge is built for just such an eventuality.

This chain of events is called by Jane Jacobs, the noted urban planner, as the 'loss-of-option-to-halt' syndrome that characterizes all freeway construction. No doubt the Chamber of Commerce is aware of it, even if some councillors are not.

The building of a 4-lane arterial in the ravine would likely have the same effect, i.e. river valley traffic would increase, must exist somewhere thus creating the need for other roads. Therefore what happens in the MacKinnon Ravine is crucial to all of Edmonton's future transportation development plans.

In spite of the drastic razing the ravine has undergone, the most serious dislocation from the freeway is yet to come. The original route out of the ravine at the west end was to be below grade. It was to emerge in a southerly direction at 145 St. then proceed west along 100 Ave. to 170 St., intersecting 149 St. below grade. Having the road run below grade considerably reduces noise pollution.

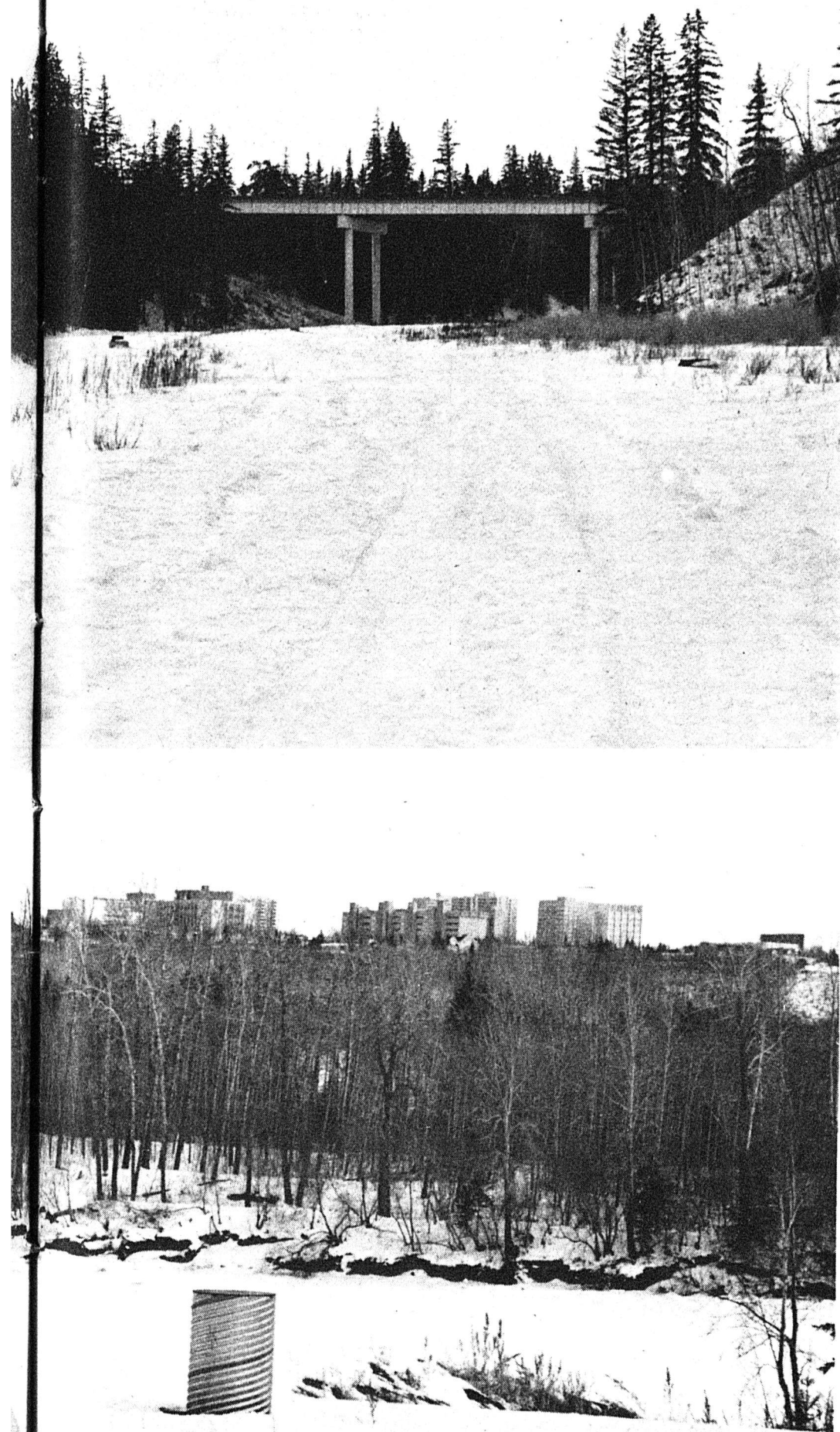
However, more recent plans indicate the road will run at grade to 170 St., creating its own traffic jam at 149 St. The alignment suggested will dislocate at least 100 families, for whom there is really no alternative housing available. The community will be fragmented by the road, and school boundaries will need to be re-set. Needless to say these costs which the community must pay for are not included in freeway construction estimates.

City Council will decide in the near future whether to proceed with the road or not. The most oft-used argument by those who favour construction is that \$2 million has already been spent on the ravine, and its value as parkland has depreciated to zero. Therefore we should pave. Those who pose this argument are unconcerned with environmental problems, and deny the need for a rapid transit system.

Those who argue against completing construction, point out that the storm sewer so installed was an unavoidable expense anyway, and that we should give priority to a rapid transit system which would be more compatible with environmental quality.

The experience of all cities undertaking freeway construction programs suggests that a reduction in public transport accompanies this construction. There is simply not enough money for both. The University's Urban Studies Department put a basic light rapid system costing about \$60 million before Edmonton City Council in November. It is unlikely the MacKinnon freeway and interchanges could be gotten for less. If one lane of rapid transit can carry as much traffic as 13 lanes of freeway, simple economics ought to indicate the superiority of rapid transit.

Finally, if the Beverly dump can be converted into a park, surely the MacKinnon can be developed, at considerably less expense, into a desirable and even unique park, for the benefit of all the citizens of Edmonton.



of parkland in Edmonton is curious. A park is a park, even if it is paved for roads or freeways. The river valley, and all the ravines would still be considered parkland even if the METS plan were completed. Thus Edmonton has more "parks" than most places.)

yet another overall transportation study as the METS plan was now obsolete.

Perhaps recognizing that the citizens' desire to save the ravine varied directly with the number of trees still standing, someone authorized the cutting of several hundred large trees near 146 St. in the

*What can you do to help save the river valley and ravines of our city?*

(1) Watch for and sign the petition forms in the Student Union lobby Tuesday March 6.

(2) Sign the coupon below and forward it to the Save Our Parks Association, 14615-Stony Plain Road, Edmonton.

(3) Phone your ward alderman and tell him your opinion.

*I favor abandoning construction of a roadway in the MacKinnon Ravine and maintaining the river valley and ravines for Park purposes.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_