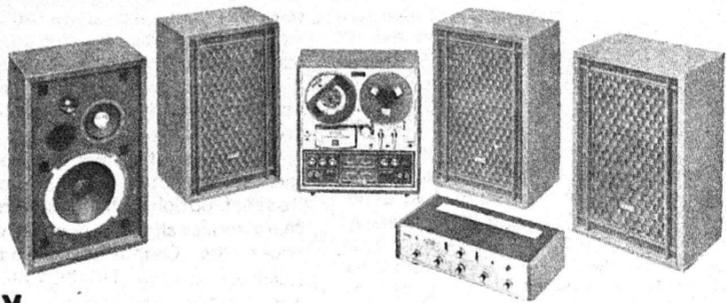


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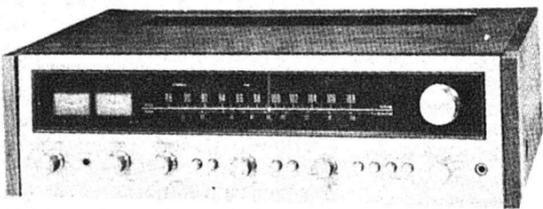
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Sharp

Blade

The sharp blade of progress first made itself felt in the MacKinnon Ravine back in 1965. Once a canyon of spruce on the North side of the River, it now lies a gaping, man-made disaster area punctuated by man hole covers.

Events leading up to this impasse began in 1963 with the publication by the city of its comprehensive traffic study, the Metropolitan Edmonton Transportation System, or the METS plan as it became known. Freeways were central to the entire plan, being indicated for the MacKinnon, Capilano and Mill Creek Ravines, the river valley and the downtown area itself. Although the plan was approved by council in 1963, it was costly: \$300 million then, probably \$700 million today.

A characteristic of the plan was that all traffic into, out of, through, and around the city ought to be funnelled into the downtown riverside area. Ring roads were not priority items but several new bridges were called for and all 3 bridges in the downtown area were to be upgraded or replaced.

Right from the start the METS plan ran into trouble. Citizens concerned about the loss of the river valley and ravines forced the city to hold a plebiscite on the first METS plan structure, the East End Bridge.

The city's choice was approved by the electorate, and the Capilano bridge came into existence. This first experience with the citizenry made the METS plan advocates on Council wary.

Coincidentally, (it was said), the Municipalities Act was changed at this time, so that a municipality no longer needed to give a money by-law 3 readings, nor need the by-law be published in the newspaper. And citizens lost the right to challenge by-laws by collecting signatures to force the matter to referendum. This made it easier for council to get approval for controversial financial undertakings.

Confrontation avoided

But for the first couple of years work on the MacKinnon ravine was simply part of the engineering department's budget. Council thus avoided confrontation with the Save Our Parks group, who were responsible for the Capilano bridge difficulty and who were attempting to save the MacKinnon Ravine. This group had little public support: in those "pre-ecology" days, parks were for bleeding hearts. It was generally accepted as dogma that freeways were necessary and desirable.

Apart from the phenomenal cost of the METS plan, it had the defect of not being amenable to development by stages.

In 1965-66, the city had severe traffic problems at several spots, none of which were covered by the METS plan. When the city made improvements, for example by building the overpass at the Groat Road and 107th St., these reduced the need for the total implementation of the plan. This is just as well, as by 1966 inflation reduced the city's ability to borrow and freeway construction became too expensive to contemplate.

\$1.5 million storm sewer

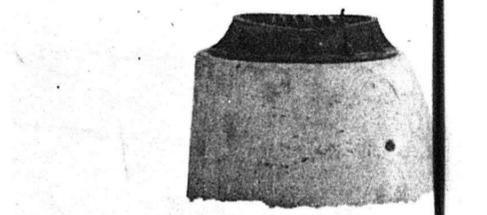
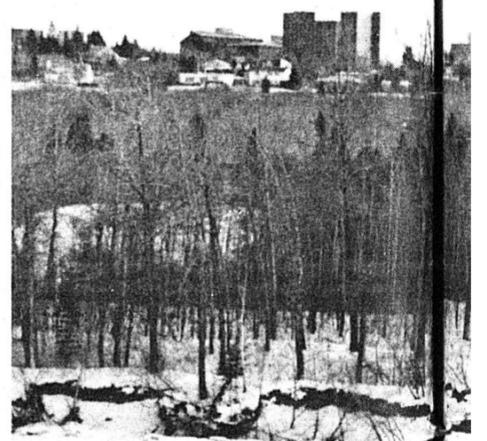
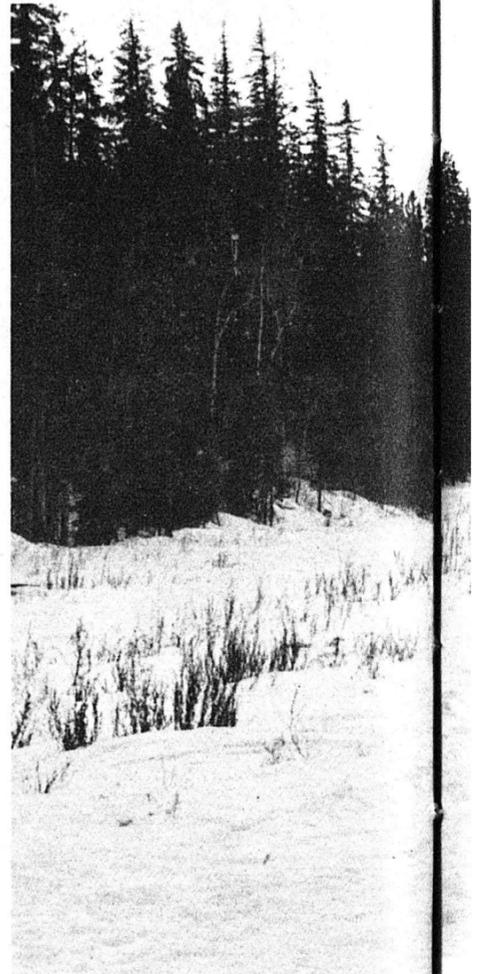
However, anticipating better days the engineers proceeded with a storm sewer installation worth \$1.5 million in the MacKinnon ravine, a necessary utility for the region in any case. This expense is often cited as reason why the road ought now to be built.

The strongest advocate on Council for roadway in the MacKinnon ravine is Dudley Menzies, formerly the Chief Commissioner of the City and since 1971, an alderman. Completion of a road in the ravine was one of his election platforms.

Ironically, Mr. Menzies looks after our interests as the city's representative on the Environmental Study Group, a subcommittee of the Environmental Observation Authority. This group is concerned with the preservation of

natural areas!

Others on City Council favouring the construction of a roadway in the ravine are Aldermen Fallow, Purvis and Newman. The latter favors a "small road". Still undecided are Alderman Olsor, Ward, and Kavanagh.



In favour of abandoning the projected freeway are Aldermen McLean, Leger, Evans, Hayter and Mayor Dent. Probably Alderman Tanner is in this category, too. Nine of the 12 aldermen said they favoured early start to rapid transit when elected in 1971.