



October 29, 2026

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Director, Park Operations

SUBJECT : **Stanley Park - Hemlock Looper Response Update – Board Briefing Memo**

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this memo is to provide Commissioners with background and project update on the ongoing Hemlock Looper response work in Stanley Park.

Site Background

Stanley Park is a 418-hectare (ha) park located in the City of Vancouver. The park has been a culturally significant place since time immemorial for the local First Nations, the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh. Approximately 263ha (63%) of the park is forested with species associated with the Coastal Western Hemlock bio-geoclimatic zone including a mix of western hemlock, Douglas-fir, western red cedar, red alder, and big leaf maple.

The park has been leased from the Federal Government since 1908 with care and stewardship obligations falling under the jurisdiction of the Park Board. Stanley Park has approximately 18-million visitors to the park annually and according to Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure data, approximately 50,000 vehicles pass along the Stanley Park Causeway and over the Lion's Gate Bridge daily.

Project Background and Approach

The [Looper Moth](#) is an endemic insect that experiences outbreaks on a 15-year cycle – these typically last for up to two years before collapsing from cold winters and natural predators. The recent outbreak started on the North Shore in 2019 and due to drought stressed trees from warmer winters and spring conditions, it impacted Stanley Park until 2023. There is no practical treatment for the insect, and pesticides such as *Bacillus Thuringiensis* (BT) also impact all other moths, butterflies, and other non-target insect species.

Urban Forestry identified the looper moth infestation in Stanley Park in 2020 and monitored tree and forest conditions for tree-related risks associated with public safety and wildfire. In July 2022, when the looper outbreak had not ceased and significant tree mortality was observed, staff submitted project referrals to Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh outlining the issues, confirming a forthcoming RFP for consultant support and Park Board's commitment to provide native lumber for cultural use and opportunities for Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh to inform post-mitigation planting and restoration plans. In 2022, professional forestry consultant B.A. Blackwell & Associates were engaged to undertake a Hemlock Looper Impact and Wildfire Risk Assessment. Their team is made up of Registered Professional Foresters; Ecologists; Registered Professional Biologists; Landscape Architects; and ISA Certified Arborists with Tree Risk Assessor Qualification (TRAQ). Blackwell have extensive experience working on looper response projects and prior to being engaged, they addressed risk mitigation work in high-use areas within and adjacent to Lynn Headwaters Regional Park in North Vancouver. Their team is

supported and managed by the Park Board Urban Forestry team composed of Registered Professional Foresters, ISA Certified Arborists, TRAQ risk assessors, Landscape Architects, Registered Professional Biologists and Archaeologists.

Blackwell's analysis of impacts based on field work in the first half of 2023 identified immediate public safety risks that needed to be mitigated in late 2023. Blackwell were engaged on an emergency basis to complete the removal of high-risk dead trees. This early phase of work was completed in Q4 2023 and Q1 2024 to address imminent risks across 67ha (25%) of the impacted forest areas including the Stanley Park Causeway and other high-use areas such as Prospect Point, the Train precinct, Pipeline Road, and sections along Stanley Park Drive. The work culminated with the planting of 25,000 native trees to restore the forest ecosystem in spring 2024.

During this time, Park Board was also able to secure the consulting services of WSP to complete archaeological assessments in advance of treatments in forested areas as well as an in-kind seedling donation from Western Forest Products to support the multi-year restoration over the 2025, 2026 and 2027 planting seasons.

Context

Since September 2024, the hemlock looper response project has been the subject of several injunctions and a judicial review challenging various decisions of the Park Board and City. The judicial review was heard on November 5-7, 2025, and the [decision](#) was publicly released on the Court's website on December 17, 2025.

The decision was generally favourable to the Park Board. The Court found that the resolutions passed by the Park Board on [October 8, 2024](#), [December 9, 2024](#) and [July 21, 2025](#) were validly enacted. The result of the decision was that the Park Board could continue with Phase Three of the hemlock looper mitigation work as directed by the July 21, 2025, resolution of the Park Board.

Current Status:

Treatment Area	Forest Area Treated ha (%)	Trees Removed over 20cm DBH	Trees Removed under 20cm DBH	Trees Planted
Total Phase I	67 ha (~25.5%)	3658	3543	25,082
Total Phase II	41 ha (~15.5%)	693	636	29,187
Total Phase III Advanced	44 ha (~17%)	1202	1284	
Total Phase III – Part 1	34 ha (~13%)	1030	1952	22,961
Totals to Date	186 (~71%)	6583	7415	77,230

Table 1: Summary of Work Completed to Date

Due to court proceedings, the final portion of Phase 3 (Figure 1) was delayed and divided into two parts, Part 1 took place between January and April 2026. Part 2 began on October 13, 2026, with tree removals expected to be completed by mid-December 2026 and restoration work planned for spring 2027. Restoration of this final phase will continue to be supported by the generous seedling donation from Western Forest Products and includes a diverse mix of species to support a stronger forest that is more resilient to future insect outbreaks and climate change impacts. Planted tree species include Western red cedar, Douglas fir, Sitka spruce, Grand fir, Red alder, and Pacific yew.

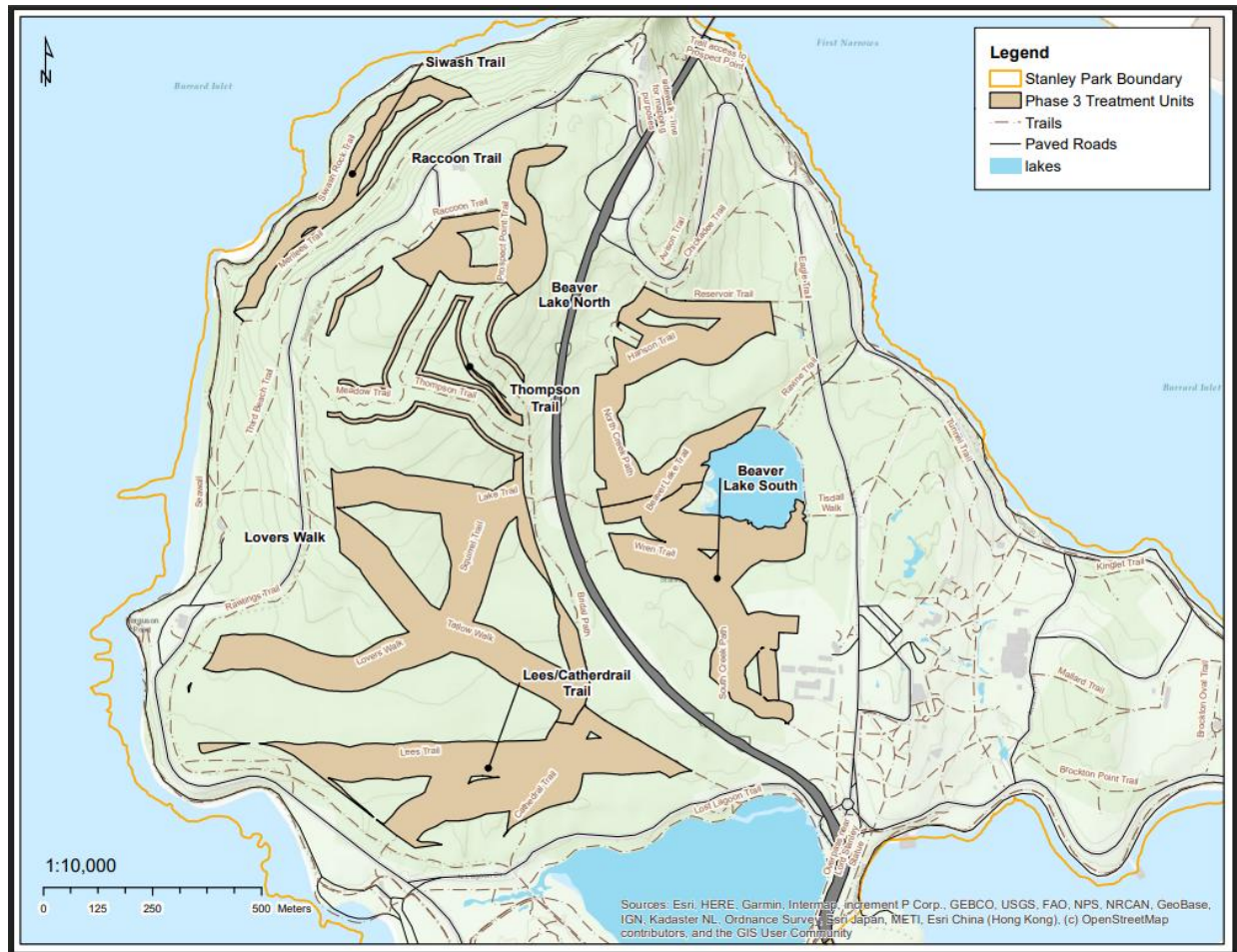


Figure 1: Phase 3 Map of Mitigation Work

Consistent with earlier phases of work, any brush and fine fuels are removed from the park and chipped into green waste. Any logs leaving Stanley Park will be delivered directly to local scaling yards for domestic use. While western red cedar and Douglas fir timber is shared with Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh for cultural use, any remaining commercially viable logs are graded and sold to local wood processing facilities including sawmills, pulp mills, and plywood plants. The financial return on wood has been minimal, and this project is not a revenue generating venture.

Some of the restoration planting has been implemented by the local First Nations and Park Board staff will continue to facilitate and support additional planting events when there is interest from the local First Nations.

Next Steps

The final stage of risk mitigation work is anticipated to be complete by mid-December 2026. Tree removals continue to be limited to dead and dying trees that present a public safety risk. Work continues to be supervised and assessed by qualified forestry professionals and tree risk assessors from both Park Board and Blackwell. In accordance with the [Park Board motion and direction from July 21, 2025](#), each treatment area prescription provided by the contractor, will be



independently reviewed by the Park Board's Director of Urban Forestry, to examine the assessment, the degree of treatment proposed and to confirm treatments are consistent with the policies and priorities of the Park Board. 25,000 additional seedlings are expected to be planted in early 2027 resulting in a total of over 100,000 seedlings planted over the course of the project.

Every effort is made by the contractor to minimize impacts to the public, ongoing park operations, park assets and infrastructure. They also ensure retention of as many dead trees as possible for wildlife habitat and fallen or cut logs are left as coarse woody debris. This helps retain moisture on the forest floor and provides biological value supporting healthy ecosystems.

Staff continue to provide ongoing project updates to Park Board Commissioners and the public at each phase milestone and further project details are available on the [Stanley Park Forest Management webpage](#). Local First Nations also continue to be engaged through site monitoring during the planting and restoration events with students and the next generation of stewards.

If interested, Urban Forestry staff would be pleased to support a tour for Park Board Commissioners to visit Stanley Park hemlock looper management areas.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amit Gandha".

Amit Gandha, (*he/him*)
Director, Park Operations – Vancouver Parks and Recreation

Copy to: PB Leadership Staff
PB Communications