

The Role of Associations in Protecting the Environment of Lakes and Rivers – A Summary

The following is viewpoint of Louis-Philippe Mayrand, the President of Federation of the Gatineau Valley Lakes and Rivers Association.

At this point, participants can come to a few conclusions which I raised during my opening remarks at the summit, i.e., that we are all responsible to some degree for the deterioration of the environment of our lakes and rivers in our valley. All users of the water must shoulder some responsibility for their rapid deterioration.

This having been said, the question now is what role should lakes associations play in protecting the water, given that there are other firmly entrenched stakeholders such as the RCMs, municipalities, governments, and so on. Expert speakers in tomorrow's law will shed light on who does what relating to legal matters.

The associations' responsibility is on another plane, because the legislation does not confer any specific authority on associations, in comparison with municipalities or the RCMs.

When we founded the Federation back in 1994-95, we identified various types of associations, which deal with road maintenance, fish stocking, lake environment protection, etc.

I think the role of lake protection associations is shaped by the roles of the government and municipal sectors – the other major stakeholders. The authority to pass legislation and regulations is the exclusive domain of the federal, provincial and municipal governments.

The lakes associations that have been formed are, in essence, voters who can serve as lobbyists to force authorities to act. As users of the water, associations must see to it that occupants are informed with respect to their shores (education and awareness), promote best practices when it comes to living on shorelines, giving shoreline residents the tools they need, etc.

Everyone has his or her field of specialization

I will let the other speakers talk about their respective roles, but I do know that regardless of the definition used, the success in protecting our environment, our natural capital as Mr. Bouchard described it, hinges on a partnership forged between the major users, and that is why we must agree on who does what.

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