



Fédération des
associations de
lacs et rivières
de la Vallée-de-
la-Gatineau



SADC
Société d'aide
au développement
des collectivités
de la Vallée-de-la-Gatineau



S u m m i t

The proceedings

on the protection
of Gatineau Valley
lakes and rivers

Septembre 14 & 15, 2007

In partnership with :

CIMA
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Desjardins
Les Caisses populaires de la Vallée-de-la-
Gatineau

Table of Contents

<i>Word from the President of the Federation of Gatineau Valley Lakes and Rivers Associations (FALRVG)</i>	3
<i>Word from the President of the Gatineau Valley SADC</i>	4
<i>Word from the Gatineau Valley Reeve</i>	5
<i>Introduction</i>	6-7
<i>Schedule</i>	8
<i>Introducing the facilitator, Pierre Cousineau</i>	9
<i>Introducing the speakers</i>	10-20
<i>Roméo Bouchard</i>	10
<i>Giorgio Vecco</i>	11
<i>Henri Fournier</i>	12
<i>Pierre Monette</i>	13
<i>Chantal Picard</i>	14
<i>Louis-Marie Poissant</i>	15
<i>Claude Beaudoin</i>	16
<i>Louis-Philippe Mayrand</i>	17
<i>Beatrix Beisner</i>	18
<i>Pierre Dallaire</i>	19
<i>Darquise Jolicoeur</i>	20
<i>Other emerging priorities and the action plan</i>	21-22
<i>Closing remarks</i>	23
<i>Lexicon</i>	24

Word from the Gatineau Valley Federation of Lakes and Rivers

Louis-Philippe Mayrand

To the participants in the Summit on the Protection of Lakes and Rivers or should I say the users of the lakes and rivers in our beautiful MRC.

As you can see, I am most enthusiastic to see in this room about a hundred people from various lake associations, municipalities, the Gatineau Valley MRC, farm producers, operators of our private and public sector forests and various associations dedicated to protecting nature and our environment.

They all share one characteristic in that they are users of the Gatineau River watershed. Though my intent is not to be a prophet of doom, I think we will receive confirmation today that some of our lakes and rivers are in woeful condition.

All of the headlines we saw and all the warnings we heard this summer about blue algae give us an understanding of the situation. I think that this issue is now upon us and the title of our summit i.e. the protection of our lakes and rivers, is most appropriate.

It is too late now to attempt to identify who caused the situation. All users of the water are responsible for its deterioration. As a cottage owner and an occupant of shoreline property, I know full well that I too am actively contributing to the deterioration of our lakes.

This having been said, I think that we must put our heads together to find out how we water users can come up with an agreement in the medium or long term to better protect our lakes and rivers.

I sincerely hope that we can do this.

Word from the President of the Gatineau Valley SADC

André Galipeau

This Summit on Lakes and Rivers is a continuation of what the SADC had organized early in the year. For the first time in this region, we got together for two days and discussed the various aspects that directly affect this sector of our economy which is vacationer market.

With the focus mainly on economic considerations, the meeting last February enabled us to discuss the strategic issues associated with this sector. Topics that come to mind are rural-urban cohabitation, the revitalization of our areas, commercial adaptation and finally sustainable development.

Emphasis was placed on these themes because each one can directly affect the development of our MRC and be the subject of deep thought.

This is why the Summit on Lakes and Rivers is a continuation of what we started last winter; however this time, the proceedings are more closely aligned with sustainable development concepts.

We must develop a collective awareness of the importance of protecting our areas and our quality of life.

This is what sets us apart from other regions, since our natural environment characterizes us as a region and destination, which has been recognized for quite some time by people from elsewhere. The presence of more than 6,000 vacationers, more than 90% of whom come from outside our MRC, proves how fortunate we are to be able to live every single day in such an attractive environment. It is up to us to take care of it and pass on down to our children what we inherited from our ancestors.

André Galipeau

Word from the Gatineau Valley Reeve

Pierre Rondeau

Ladies and Gentlemen:
Ogima,

Hello
Kwey,

The future of the Gatineau Valley, our drainage basins, our lakes and our rivers are important concerns.

It is essential for me to take part in this summit and to speak with you, hear what you have to say and report today's exchanges back to the elected officials of the local municipalities.

This summit will enable you to gain an objective perspective of facts and opinions expressed to this effect.

Are you familiar with 3200lakes.com? This entails 3,424 square kilometers to discover. This natural setting and its attractions are what we must protect and develop.

Does our development hinge on what we do with this water?

Enjoy the summit!

WATER IS THE SOURCE OF LIFE ON EARTH

Introduction

About a hundred stakeholders from Gatineau Valley vacationer circles met during the summit organized by the Federation of Gatineau Valley Lakes and Rivers Associations (FALRVG) and the Gatineau Valley *Société d'aide au développement de la collectivité* (SADC) in cooperation with the Gatineau Valley RCM last September 14-15 at the Château Logue – Hôtel – Golf – Resort in Maniwaki.

On day one, participants assessed the current situation and were assisted by several experts including Roméo Bouchard, co-founder of the *Union paysanne* and a major player in regional development in Québec. Participants representing vacationers, associations, municipalities and development organizations attended speeches on the Gatineau River watershed, water quality, vacationer development, blue algae, territory management tools, legal aspects, etc.

The purpose of this summit was to create a collective awareness among all users of waterways in the Gatineau Valley RCM of the urgency and importance of protecting the environment of the lakes and rivers in our RCM. Given that various regions have to deal with water quality problems, it is important that we set realistic objectives, while bearing in mind that pressure on the territory will continue to increase. The five observations and priority actions relating thereto prove the willingness of stakeholders in the area to maintain the quality of our waterways.

The organizers were very satisfied with what was accomplished during the summit. The comments participants made in the evaluation forms were generally quite positive. Here is a sampling:

- This meeting is exemplary. Let's hope that the repercussions will be as strong as the determination of the people in attendance here.
- All the speakers were very interesting, but there was a lot of repetition from one speech to the next. Moreover, people already familiar with the subject did not learn that much that is new.
- Interesting speeches and good exchanges. Bravo!
- Excellent choice of resource persons.
- Very educational.
- I congratulate the organizers of this meeting, and I hope that the committee that follows up on this meeting will be successful.
- The organizers did a great job. I noted that many of the same issues discussed at the February symposium were discussed. We must be careful to avoid repeating the same things over and over. Follow-up is essential.

- Thank you and congratulations. The summit should become an annual event. Bring in more experts to discuss the problems raised. Ensure that all people and organizations are represented.
- Very good, you are a model which I hope others will emulate.
- Let's hope that there is another summit to follow up on this one.
- The only thing left to do is to take action.

When asked about their overall evaluation of the summit and the speeches, participants gave these items a rating of 4.53 out of 5 or 91% and 3.92 out of 5 or 78% respectively.

Schedule

Friday, September 14, 2007

8h30	Welcome
9h00	Word of welcome and instructions to participants
9h15	Introduction of the speaker
9h18	Opening speech
9h48	Question period
10h10	Break
10h30	Description of the Gatineau River watershed by Giorgio Vecco (COMGA)
10h50	Specific observations in the watershed
11h10	Moving toward accelerated development of the vacationer market and its effects on the territory
11h30	Limnology 101 – Why the water in our lakes and rivers is deteriorating by Henri Fournier (MRNF)
12h00	Lunch
1h30	What is cyanobacteria ? by Chantal Picard (MDDEP)
1h50	Cyanobacteria and the effects on health by Louis-Marie Poissant – Direction of the Outaouais Public Health Directorate
	Current protection
	Status of measures taken to protect the water in our MRC :
2h10	MRC development plans by Claude Beaudoin (MRC)
2h35	Urban planning by Claude Beaudoin (MRC)
2h55	Lakes associations by Louis-Philippe Mayrand (Fédération des lacs)
3h10	Break
3h25	Speech : What will be the consequences if nothing is done ? by Beatrix Beisner
4h30	End of day one

Saturday, September 15, 2007

8h30	Welcome
9h00	Speech and question period on the tools the municipalities have at hand by Me Pierre Dallaire from Beaudry-Bertrand
9h30	Speech and question period on recourse by Me Darquise Jolicoeur from Beaudry-Bertrand
10h00	Summary by Roméo Bouchard and preparation of the plenary session
10h30	Break
10h45	Instructions on electronic participation
10h50	Start of the plenary session
12h00	Lunch
1h15	Resumption of the plenary session - identifying priority actions that emerge and an action plan for the next ten years
2h30	Conclusion
2h40	Wrap-up

Introducing the Facilitator

Pierre Cousineau

pierre.cousineau@videotron.qc.ca

Mr. Cousineau was trained in versification at the Collège Marie-médiatrice in Hull and received a certificate in communication from St. Paul University in Ottawa.

Mr. Cousineau was a communication adviser for Communication-Québec. He has developed training for communicators in emergencies and was a civil safety spokesman when emergency measures were implemented, which include Oka (the Aboriginal crisis), the North Shore (forest fire), Rouyn and Laval (floods), Aylmer (a tornado) and St. Amable (a tire fire).

Introducing the speakers

N.B.: Most presentations are available along with the results of electronic voting in the “Presentations and Conferences” section of this site.

Roméo Bouchard

Natural resources – a key economic lever in outlying regions

Roméo Bouchard authored “*Y a-t-il un avenir pour les régions*” (*Is there a future for regions?*)” and is the director of the collective publication entitled “*L’Éolien, pour qui souffle le vent*” (*Wind energy – the wind is blowing in that direction*), the coordinator of the “*Coalition pour un Québec des Régions*” (*Coalition for a Québec of Regions*), and founder and former president of the *Union paysanne*. He has also been a teacher, journalist, farmer, biologist and local development officer.

Even though natural resources such as the forest, mines, agriculture or energy must still be the building blocks of the economy in outlying regions, natural resources are destined to become an increasingly important niche and lever. It is therefore crucial that this resource not be allowed to be pillaged and devastated, as others have been, by the negligence and irresponsibility of our local and national governments. The management of water, outdoor and resort activities under current conditions require that municipal officials and citizens take charge both locally and regionally. From a decentralization standpoint, these responsibilities should essentially be shouldered by local and regional governments.

Giorgio Vecco
Portrait du Bassin versant de la Rivière Gatineau

Mr. Vecco graduated in agronomy in Brazil in 1981, earned his master's in irrigation and drainage two years later and his Ph.D. in 1990 from the University of Turin in Italy. He has about 25 years' experience in general agriculture with a specialization in irrigation and drainage. He has worked as a consultant in 10 different countries in 4 continents, and in addition, he speaks 5 languages.

In the past 10 years, he has focused his activities mainly in the transfer of the management of the public sector irrigation consortium to associations of water users. In Canada, he discovered the management of natural water resources, not so much within so-called administrative boundaries (municipal, RCMs, etc.) but more along the periphery and natural respect of watersheds.

He has been with the Gatineau River Watershed (COMGA) for one year where he has regained the pleasure of learning more while at the same time contributing his experience to a framework of integrated, natural and sustainable development. He is still quite enthusiastic about water management and still fascinated by the marvels that well managed water can generate.

Mr. Vecco's presentation today will underscore the importance of having entities such as the Gatineau Valley MRC and other MRCs as sub-units within COMGA. In order to preserve water resources, it is important that all decisions concerning water management policy be consistent with one another within the watershed and enable COMGA to accomplish what has been decided in terms of water governance within its own watershed.

A summary of activities COMGA has been involved in to date has also been presented.

Henri Fournier

Why the water in our lakes and rivers is deteriorating

Henri Fournier has been an expert biologist with the Department of Natural Resources and Wildlife for close to 30 years and the coordinator of lake trout management for all of Québec. During this time, his activities have centered on the management of fish populations which are harvested by sports and commercial fishers. His involvement in the lake trout case got him more interested in the evolution of the habitat of this species which is particularly affected by eutrophication. His areas of activity also include the conservation of rare or threatened fish species and the invasion of fish habitats by exotic species.

The health of our lakes. Why we should be worried about eutrophication.

In his presentation, discussion will focus first on the main pressures that are lakes are under, their effect on water quality, fish habitat and human use of the waterways. Of the factors identified, eutrophication emerges as a fundamental problem which absolutely must be dealt with. The discussion will then get around to the action that citizens and municipal authorities must take to avoid the eutrophication of lakes. Land use planning which respects the lake support capacity should rank at the top of the list of steps to be taken.

Condition of certain lakes south of the Gatineau Valley MRC

Available data will be used in this presentation to depict the situation of lakes south of the Gatineau Valley RCM. Two indicators were selected: the habitat of lake trout and total phosphorous content in the spring runoff. Whether the issue is the evolution of the quality of the lake trout habitat or phosphorous concentration in the lakes where it was measured, it can be seen that lakes south of this RCM have already been enriched and several others seem to be heading in that direction.

Pierre Monette

Pierre Monette has been the Director General of SADC for 13 years. In addition to funding businesses, SADC works on various local development projects, including vacationers.

Mr. Monette's presentation defines vacationers, who they are, why they chose the Gatineau Valley, how many there are, their concentration on the territory, present and future demand, the effects of increasing demand and the economic, social and environmental effects of the growth of the vacationer segment.

Chantal Picard
What is blue algae?

A trained biologist specializing in ecology, Ms. Picard has been working with the Department of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks (MDDEP) for more than one year in the water and natural environments sector for the Outaouais division. The relevant cases she has been working on include the conservation of lakes, shores and wetlands, the problem of blue algae and cooperation with watershed committees (especially the COMGA).

Ms. Picard's speech will include a definition of blue algae and touch on their ecological roles and environmental indicators to determine the risks of proliferation. She will attempt to clarify some common questions. Prevention and a status report on the situation in the Outaouais will also be discussed.

Louis-Marie Poissant
Blue algae and effects on health

Louis-Marie Poissant works in the Direction de la Santé publique de l'Outaouais.

N.B. Something came up at the last minute which prevented Mr. Poissant from making it, but Jean-Pierre Courteau, also from Direction de la Santé publique de l'Outaouais, filled in and gave the presentation.

Mr. Courteau's presentation dealt mainly with the types of toxins in blue algae and the health problems they are known to cause. Blue algae are a relatively recent phenomenon, which only dates back 10 years in the Outaouais. Problems arise when they come in contact with skin or are consumed.

Claude Beaudoin
Development diagrams and land-use plans

Mr. Beaudoin is the coordinator of the Gatineau Valley RCM Land Use Department.

N.B. His presentation was not yet available when this paper was produced but will be added as soon as possible.

Louis-Philippe Mayrand

Louis-Philippe Mayrand is a consultant in the health and social services field. He has been president of the Gatineau Valley Lakes and Rivers Federation since 1995 and is president of the Lac Paquin Environment Protection Association since 2005. He is also president of the Gatineau River Watershed Management Committee.

N.B. His presentation was not yet available when this paper was produced but will be added as soon as possible.

Beatrix Beisner

What will be the consequences if nothing is done?

Dr. Beatrix Beisner has been a professor with the Department of Biological Sciences at UQAM since 2003. She is a FQRNT strategic professor in aquatic biodiversity and was previously a professor at the University of Guelph. From 2000-2002, she worked as a post-doctoral researcher at the Center for Limnology, University of Wisconsin-Madison on the effect of exotic species and eutrophication. She earned her doctorate in 2000 at the University of British Columbia on the interaction between water mixing and the composition of algae communities. Ms. Beisner, who originally hails from Ottawa, has fond memories of her summers at the cottage on petit lac Brochet in the watershed of rivière du Lièvre.

Her research interests are in the ecology of plankton communities (plants and animals). This includes the effect of exotic species and the physical and chemical factors that affect the proliferation of algal blooms.

Human impact on fresh waterways

There is currently a great deal of interest in Québec in (1) blue algae and (2) exotic species. The proliferation of blue algae is not a problem limited only to Québec. In fact, it is well known that this is an end result of the eutrophication of surface waters all over the world. I will first discuss what we can learn from these other cases. I will also summarize the day's discussions on the eutrophication of lakes and rivers and the ecology of blue algae. Finally, I will discuss a few "myths" surrounding blue algae. I will also summarize the situation of exotic species and emphasize the differences between both of these problems.

N.B. Her presentation was not yet available when this paper was produced but will be added as soon as possible.

Pierre Dallaire
The tools at the municipalities' disposal

Pierre Dallaire is a lawyer and works for Beaudry–Bertrand in Gatineau.

N.B. His presentation was not yet available when this paper was produced but will be added as soon as possible.

Darquise Jolicoeur
Recourse

Madame Darquise Jolicoeur is a lawyer and works for Beaudry–Bertrand in Gatineau.

N.B. Her presentation was not yet available when this paper was produced but will be added as soon as possible.

Other emerging priorities and the action plan

The aim of the September 15 plenary session was also to come up with an action plan for vacationers and specific courses of action to be taken in the coming months. “This summit eloquently confirmed that natural resources can become an important lever for the region. What you do here will serve as an example elsewhere,” declared Roméo Bouchard, in his wrap-up summary. Using an instant electronic voting system, participants were able to produce five major observations:

A myriad of options were suggested to address each of these issues - joining a popular movement demanding that phosphates be banned in soaps; distributing all relevant information to vacationers and to entrepreneurs and various municipal stakeholders; rehabilitating shores, characterizing all lakes to be integrated into the development plan; reviewing how lakes are occupied (e.g., allowing common access to the lakes and building housing further from the shoreline); improving the knowledge of erosion-related problems stemming from human intervention; creating an obligation to reforest shorelines; putting together water quality monitoring teams; informing users on how to avoid contaminating lakes with water milfoil when transferring boats; improving vacationer involvement in municipal activities; giving municipal inspectors better tools to ensure compliance with regulations, and so on.

Although the options were numerous and imply long-range work, Summit organizers showed an interest in getting started rather quickly. “We are all somewhat responsible for protecting our lakes and rivers and ensuring water quality for tomorrow.” About thirty recommendations were proposed during the summit. For starters, I am acting first on the willingness to put together a working group quickly to come up with action to propose for 2008 as early as next spring,” indicated Gatineau Valley RCM Reeve Pierre Rondeau.

1 – Phosphates are enemy number one. Solutions:

- 1.1 Join a popular movement requesting that government authorities ban phosphates in soaps;
- 1.2 Inform shoreline residents quickly and directly about existing regulations. Informative kit to be given to shoreline property owners. Newsletter sent to all taxpayers.
- 1.3 Shore rehabilitation
- 1.4 Establish a committee
- 1.5 Contact contractors to make them aware
- 1.6 Improve the tanks to limit the amount of phosphates produced.

2 – Lakes do have development limits. Solutions :

- 2.1 Characterize all lakes to be included in the land use diagram. The RCM should give itself the means required to accept or reject a new project.
- 2.2 Review how the lakes are occupied, e.g., access to the lake for everyone with cottages further.
- 2.3 Produce a development model and thereby respond to the needs of the local population.

3 – All users of waterways are responsible for their deterioration and rehabilitation (\$). Solutions :

- 3.1 Go through lakes associations. They must be well organized, well informed and must work with the municipalities.
- 3.2 Improve knowledge of the erosion-related problems traced back to human intervention (roads, etc.)
- 3.3 Obligation to reforest the shorelines.

4 – Invading species pose a major threat to our natural capital. Solutions :

- 4.1 Improve knowledge and implement monitoring teams. React when major changes are noted.
- 4.2 Prevention is the solution. Put up signs showing what water milfoil looks like and take them down when changing lakes. Water milfoil often gets wound around the propellers of the engines.

5 – Local communities must regain control of their resources. Solutions :

- 5.1 Get vacationers more involved in municipal life. Make the voting process for vacationers easier.
- 5.2 The municipalities must appoint a councilor responsible for water protection.
- 5.3 Better equip municipal inspectors when it comes to enforcing by-laws.
- 5.4 Examine the possibility of implementing Municipal Court service.

Closing remarks

Pierre Rondeau

Do a follow-up on the summit, something like was done for the symposium last February. We are also somewhat responsible for protecting our lakes and rivers and ensuring water quality for tomorrow. A follow-up committee will be formed. About thirty recommendations were made. We should have action to propose for 2008 sometime next spring.

Pierre Monette

The Gatineau Valley SADC, which has been actively working on this case for a few years, has also pledged to continue the efforts. “I along with our partners will form the committee. We will be able to meet once again next February or March to propose solutions and action for the purpose of making a collective effort,” declared Pierre Monette, the Director General of SADC.

Louis-Philippe Mayrand

Thanks for joining us. We have gotten off to a good start to resolve this issue.

N.B. Most presentations are available along with the results of electronic voting in the Presentations and Conferences section of this site.

Lexicon

- Cyanobacteria:** Cyanobacteria is the name given to blue algae floating on the surface of ponds. The first species identified were blue, which is where the algae got their name. The species identified in the time since come in different colours, ranging from olive green to red.
- Milfoil:** The Eurasian water-milfoil is a submerged plant that grows in aquatic grassbeds. The species is distinguished from an indigenous milfoil, which is called a whitish water-milfoil, due to the segments on each side of the leaf that resemble a feather. The Eurasian water-milfoil has more than 12 segments, while the indigenous milfoil has fewer than 11. Moreover, the upper portions of Eurasian water-milfoil leaves are often truncated.
- COMGA :** Comité de gestion du Bassin Versant de la Rivière Gatineau (Gatineau River Watershed Management Committee)
www.comga.org
- DSP :** Direction de la Santé Publique (Public Health Directorate).
www.santepublique-outaouais.qc.ca
- MDDEP :** Ministère du Développement Durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs (Department of Sustainable Development, the Environment and Parks)
www.mddep.gouv.qc.ca
- MRFN :** Ministère des Ressources Naturelles et de la Faune (Department of Natural Resources and Wildlife).
www.mrnf.gouv.qc.ca
- CREDDO :** Conseil Régional de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable de l'Outaouais (Outaouais Regional Council of the Environment and Sustainable Development)
www.creddo.ca