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ZIP Chronicle

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New chairperson for Quebec under St Lawrence Vision 2000



Me Jean Maurice Latulippe
Photo : Environnement Québec

At the start of January 2001, Me Jean Maurice Latulippe became the new chairperson for the Canada-Quebec Co-operation Agreement on the St Lawrence, taking over from George Arsenault, who held this position for nearly four years. Me Latulippe will co-chair the Agreement Management Committee, in collaboration with Jean-Pierre Gauthier, the chairperson for Canada.

For the past few months, Me Jean Maurice Latulippe has served as Assistant Deputy Minister of environmental policy on water and agricultural and municipal activities in the Quebec Department of the Environment. "We need to clarify the measures applied to water

management, particularly for groundwater, and make sure that Quebec assumes its responsibilities related to the St Lawrence," said Me Latulippe.

Me Latulippe is a member of the Quebec Bar. After acquiring several years of experience in municipal law with a private firm, he joined the Quebec government. He has been with the Department of the Environment since 1990, holding various management positions, notably in the municipal sector. He has played an active role related to water issues, and in his capacity as director of municipal sector policy, he was called upon to serve as the departmental spokesperson during the proceedings of the Water Management Commission set up by the provincial environmental public hearings body, better known as BAPE. His extensive experience in this field represents an asset in relation to the duties he is required to fulfil under St Lawrence Vision 2000.

Me Latulippe stated that he is very enthusiastic about this new mandate, and it corresponds to his concerns related to the St Lawrence, and that he will work to ensure integrated resource management, for the benefit of the communities living along this unique waterway. ■

New agreements for protecting wetlands along the St Lawrence

Founded in 1996, the Société de conservation des milieux humides du Québec (Quebec society for wetland conservation) is a non-profit land trust whose primary mission is to protect and enhance wetlands in Quebec. It signs voluntary conservation agreements with owners of marsh, swamps and peatland, encouraging them to ensure the sustainability of natural habitats. Thanks to the financial support offered through the Community Interaction program of St Lawrence Vision 2000 (SLV 2000), the society concluded agreements, in 1999 and 2000, to protect an additional 65 ha of wetlands.

Over the past 10 years, a number of public and private sector conservation organizations have expressed the hope that land trusts will be able to collaborate more actively on protecting biodiversity on privately owned lands. The Société de conservation des milieux humides du Québec (SCMHQ) carries out activities in keeping with this request. Its primary working tool is private stewardship.

Two of the new areas protected by the SCMHQ are located along the freshwater estuary of the St Lawrence: the nature reserves of Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pérade and Sainte-Croix-de-Lotbinière. A third protected area, the Rivière-du-Sud nature reserve, is located on the Richelieu River, one of the main tributaries of the St Lawrence targeted by SLV 2000.

Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pérade nature reserve

The SCMHQ first undertook to create the Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pérade nature reserve in 1997. Last year, an area of 21 ha was added to the reserve, bringing the total number of hectares of protected wetlands in this sector to 68.

The newly protected section includes mature silver maple stands—a type of swamp habitat that is at risk in the freshwater estuary of the St Lawrence. The wetlands in this region represent crucial habitats for wildlife. The main spawning site of Atlantic tomcod along the river is located here. This species generates major economic spinoffs for the Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pérade region through ice fishing activities. In addition to its mature silver maple stands, this area features some of the threatened and vulnerable plant species of the freshwater estuary of the St Lawrence.

Sainte-Croix-de-Lotbinière nature reserve

In the Chaudière-Appalaches region, the SCMHQ has created a protective strip of 7 ha around the Pointe-Platon ecological reserve, a conservation area administered by the Quebec Department of the Environment. The new Sainte-Croix-de-Lotbinière nature reserve is aimed at protecting habitat for the threatened and vulnerable species that live there. This addition to Quebec's network of protected areas will also help to preserve a quality habitat for the Northern dusky salamander, an amphibian that is likely to be listed

as threatened or vulnerable under the provincial Act respecting threatened or vulnerable species.

This nature reserve provides a new means of accessing the St Lawrence, which can be used for educational purposes, as well as for emergency response measures, for example, in the event of a spill in this section of the river.

Rivière-du-Sud nature reserve

Lastly, in the Haut-Richelieu region, the SCMHQ is working to preserve a 38 ha swamp located on the point called pointe du Gouvernement, at the confluence of two rivers, the rivière du Sud and the Richelieu. This new protected area is an important habitat for four species given special status by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), that is, the spiny softshell turtle, the least bittern, the cerulean warbler and the false hop hedge. The latter species is listed as threatened under the provincial Act respecting threatened or vulnerable species. The new protected area also features a stand of swamp white oaks, a rare plant community in Quebec.

Important areas added to protect the biodiversity of the St Lawrence

Through its activities, the SCMHQ is helping to protect the natural habitats of the St Lawrence in sectors where the majority of wetlands are privately owned.

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Chronicle

ZIP Committees in
the Heat of the Action

Rive nord de l'estuaire ZIP Committee

Residents committed to protecting the St Lawrence

Year after year, the shores of the Manicouagan Peninsula undergo erosion due to the effects of the tides and storms. In summer 2000, with a view to implementing a sustainable and environmentally friendly solution to this problem, the Rive nord de l'estuaire ZIP Committee began to test a beach renewal technique developed by two residents. In addition, all residents were invited to help protect the St Lawrence through the adoption of a code of ethics covering activities carried out near shoreline areas. Thus, the ZIP Committee has called on riverside residents to contribute their innovative ideas and also put their hearts into attaining the objectives of protecting, conserving and enhancing the St Lawrence.

Many municipalities located on peninsulas have to grapple with severe shoreline erosion problems. Most owners of waterfront property try to slow the erosive action of the tides by placing rip-rap along bank areas that sustain the worst damage. Some have conceded defeat in the face of the inexorable action of the sea. However, Lucien Maltais and Jean-Pierre Savard, of Baie-Saint-Ludger, have dedicated seven years to testing a new technique for beach restoration. Their approach received such an enthusiastic response from the community that a project was launched in summer 2000 to conduct testing on a larger scale along with rigorous scientific monitoring.

With financial support from the Community Interaction program of St Lawrence Vision 2000, the Rive nord de l'estuaire ZIP Committee has directed this project, in which the RCM of Manicouagan, Hydro-Québec and the Institut des sciences de la mer (ISMER) are also participating. Other key contributors include the Pointe-aux-Outardes nature park, Kruger Inc.—Scierie Manic, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Human Resources Development Canada.

A restoration technique that has sparked a lot of interest

During summer 2000, seven structures were installed in the Baie-Saint-Ludger and Pointe-aux-Outardes sectors. The technique employed was as follows: wooden posts are driven into the sand to form a sort of cage in which spruce tree tops are placed, and then this structure is closed off. At low tide, these fir tree-shaped arrangements, termed groin systems, are visible. This type of structure, developed through several years of testing, appears to permit improved sand build-up on beaches. During storms and at high tide, the groin systems allow water to pass through but hold sand on the beach. Over the long term, they fill up with sand and the embankments thus formed serve as breakwaters and reduce the erosive action of the water against the berm on the

landward part of the beach. The sea thus becomes an ally in restoring and protecting beaches that it previously eroded.

"Three months after installing these structures, we noted that a few centimetres of sand had accumulated within the groin systems, showing their potential for promoting sand accumulation on beaches," says Nicolas Roy, Co-ordinator of the ZIP Committee, while pointing out that this method is much more environmentally friendly and less costly than rip-rap. "All next year, ISMER is going to conduct scientific monitoring of the structures to assess this technique's potential for countering the erosive effect of the tides and waves on the shoreline." Additional groin systems will be installed in spring 2001, in light of the positive preliminary findings from the monitoring of existing structures.

Pending receipt of a patent, the designers of this new method are hoping to be able to commercialize the expertise acquired both in Quebec and around the world.

Protecting the coastal environment is everyone's business!

Although devising a beach renewal technique is beyond the capability of most residents of the North Shore Estuary ZIP, the ZIP Committee has called on the whole community to take concrete steps to protect the St Lawrence. In summer 2000, for example, it published a code of ethics intended for river users in the region. This document, a 36-page notebook entitled *Mon guide plein air... je m'en sers!*

The guide is not legally binding, but is instead a tool for raising residents' awareness and encouraging them to

avoid behaviours that could harm the quality of the environment during their outdoor activities.

As a complement to the code of ethics, seven interpretation panels have been designed and will be erected next summer in the municipalities of Escoumins, Longue-Rive, Sainte-Anne-de-Portneuf, Essipit and Forestville.

The Rive nord de l'estuaire ZIP Committee has introduced projects that allow riverside residents to play an active role in promoting the long-term health of the St Lawrence.

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