

UNANIMOUS SUPPORT FOR THE PROTECTION OF WATERWAYS

Maniwaki, November 18, 2008 – Last November 10 and 17, two major meetings dealing with the creation of a regional fund to protect lakes and rivers in the region were held in the Gatineau Valley. These meetings produced a unanimous agreement to create a fund.

In response to an invitation issued by the Gatineau Valley SADC, the Gatineau Valley Federation of Lakes and Rivers Associations (FALR) and the Gatineau Valley RCM, the elected officials and representatives of various associations of vacationers or lakes in the region were invited to discuss the establishment of a fund to protect Gatineau Valley lakes and rivers. For municipalities and associations of vacationers and lakes in the southern sector, this meeting took place in Gracefield on November 10 and in Grand-Remous on November 17 for representative of the northern sector.

In February 2007, SADC held the very first symposium on vacationer development in the Gatineau Valley from the standpoint of sustainable development. This was followed by the Gatineau Valley Summit on the Protection of Lakes and Rivers in September 2007, which was organized by the SADC, the FALR and the RCM. The summit resulted in the establishment of a working committee tasked with devising a plan calling for specific actions based on the leads developed at the summit. In May 2008, a five-year plan aimed at protecting Gatineau Valley waterways was presented. Those in attendance at that time already saw the need for urgent and necessary action.

Since that time, much work has gone into to establishing a regional intervention fund. Twenty-three representatives of municipalities and associations attended the meeting held on November 10 and sixteen of their counterparts attended the other meeting exactly one week later. They all unanimously endorsed the need to create a fund to protect Gatineau Valley lakes and rivers and to implement an action plan. Along with an initial \$60,000, this regional fund will use its leverage to collect from other levels (of government) the remaining funding needed to finalize the estimated budget of slightly more than \$160,000 for year one. This money will make it possible to undertake the actions proposed in the five-year plan to protect the Gatineau Valley waterways; however, everyone agrees that this represents a bare minimum and that further action, which hinge on the funding available, is highly desirable.

“Vacation living is vitally important to our region economically, and the demand for that lifestyle is strong and could well stay that way. If nothing is done to relieve the pressure on our lakes attributable to human presence, significant environmental problems, and attendant major social and economic impacts could result. It is therefore imperative that the development of vacation living be planned, taking into account the economic, social and environmental issues, which will enable us to implement the five-year plan,” observed Pierre Monette, the Director General of SADC.

Requests for contributions totaling \$60,000 were sent to the 17 municipalities on the territory to create the fund to protect Gatineau Valley lakes and rivers. Those managing this case hope to receive positive answers quickly to move forward with the actions in the five-year plan, which participants at the two aforementioned meetings felt were necessary and urgent.

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Pierre Monette,
Gatineau Valley SADC