

Association des Propriétaires du Lac Poisson Blanc (2014), Inc.

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Subject: Informational letter following the integration of the environmental aspect to the Association and the application 2009-206 interim control by-law

Dear Members,

The purpose of this historical presentation is to clarify the series of events resulting from the integration of the environmental aspect into the Association des Propriétaires du Lac Poisson Blanc Inc. and the Association des Propriétaires du Lac Poisson Blanc (2014) Inc. since 2013 and the application of the MRC's 2009-206 interim control by-law.

In June 2013, I was asked to join the Association. Given the aquatic plant issue in Newton Bay and the Association's following mandate:

"... to protect and defend the interests of its owners. To protect its wildlife and ecology, and finally, to promote partnerships between our nice big lake's users."

and for everyone's benefit, I accepted to be in charge of the Association's environmental aspect. It wanted to be proactive in resolving this issue. My mandate was to analyze and provide a report on Lac Poisson Blanc's south section current situation along with solutions. So this report, entitled 'Current situation report on Lac Poisson Blanc's south section – July 2013' (<http://www.lacpoissonblanc.ca/green-issues/>), was established following consultations (emails, meetings and COBALI visit) and did not represent my personal ideas.

Following an information request made with the Lac Sainte-Marie municipality, I met two individuals in charge of local associations. It's after the general assembly of one of these associations that I found out about COBALI and Regroupement pour la protection de l'eau de la Vallée de la Gatineau. Our Association joined COBALI and the Regroupement as it was strongly recommended to us.

It's by attending these meetings that I realized that the Association des Propriétaires du Lac Poisson Blanc was not aware of some accomplished facts including the MRC's 2009-206 interim control by-law approved in 2009. Its purpose was to amend the development plan to include measures to protect banks, shorelines and floodplains. A two to three year awareness timeframe under the authority of a person in charge of the environment in each municipality was suggested. Though other local associations were made aware of this by-law, ours wasn't. Awareness was not raised in the Newton Bay area.

During this time, the Association joined the RSLV [Voluntary lake monitoring network] in order to undertake water tests. The goal of this step was to, in part, resolve the invasive aquatic plant issue. The Lac Sainte-Marie municipality issued an official certificate (article 236 - Land Use Planning and Development Act) giving permission to access property in order to raise awareness on different environmental issues in our sector and the 2009-206 by-law. Along with COBALI who provided an awareness officer, we went around all of the properties in July 2013 and handed out the first awareness documents. At this time, there was already a delay in its application since awareness measures were to be already taken.

In August 2013, the above-mentioned situation report was sent to members and to the municipality by email and

distributed at the picnic. Given the delay and hoping to warn and inform Lac Poisson Blanc owners, an information booth about different regulations in place was set up at the Jean-Marc and chemin Grand Poisson Blanc intersection (article in the September 11, 2015 issue of the Le Choix newspaper and article in the September 12, 2015 issue of the La Gatineau newspaper).

During this time, the Association sent an information request for a potential plan of action for invasive aquatic plants. It was filed with the environment and urbanism committee. During a meeting with this committee, it was explained to me that it was possible that there was a problem with some leaky antiquated septic tank systems in our sector and that a verification would take place.

Following a short awareness raising period in Lac Poisson Blanc that took place in 2013, I wrote the Code of Ethics with COBALI's assistance. I was aware of the issue for some owners and it's for this reason that article 3.2 of our Code of Ethics was written by adding: "...a mandatory agreement must be negotiated between the old residents (those built inside this limit) and the new residents (that apply the new by-law) in agreement with the municipality as well as with the COBALI organization."

The Association was not a COBALI member for summer 2014, so the awareness program with it was not continued that summer. That same year, the MRC was producing formal warnings for the 2009-2016 by-law.

The Code of Ethics was sent to members in the spring of 2014 for them to review it. It was for me a fair compromise for all owners. This document was sent to the municipality to have the exactness of the by-laws presented verified. That same spring, the Lac Sainte-Marie and Denholm municipalities hired an environment student to help us continue our 2009-2016 by-law awareness program with owners (as replacement of COBALI). The Association continued its cooperation with this person.

In June, this student asked me to take her to some properties by boat. I willingly accepted. Following this, she explained to me that her mandate was the application of the MRC by-law and not raising awareness around it. I showed her our letter that indicated a request for help in finding a solution to the proliferation of aquatic plants and the continuation of the awareness program. She was to ask for clarification. Reassured, we continued our property visits. She had a letter indicating that she had the right to inspect them. At the end of the day, she informed me of my own shoreline by-law violation. Moreover, she was talking to be about violations and the MRC's next visit and not about an awareness period. I explained that we never had an awareness raising period like other municipalities.

In light of this and since it's not the Association, but rather the MRC, the Regroupement and the municipality that manage the application of the by-law with regards to shoreline matters, I asked two key individuals, the student hired by the municipalities and the municipal inspector to come and explain the letter and the mandate given to the student as well as the situation by participating in our August 2014 general assembly. Both accepted, however neither was able to make it.

At the August 2014 general assembly, the Code of Ethics was presented again and voted on by the majority of the members present with a note however asking that there be one last period of time allotted to make some changes, which was done during winter of 2014. During this meeting, I presented a brief summary of the work done to the members and a summary of the inspections that were undertaken. On 84 visits, there were about thirty properties that respected the regulation and 31 were in violation: lawn cutting or fire pit too near the shoreline. The rest, like myself, had changes to make to their property (access or dock). At the end, I was congratulated by several members present which gave me the impression that a good majority of people had accepted the notice conclusions sent despite the very fast 2013 awareness project (three years of awareness raising done in one summer).

During this time, I met the municipality's general manager and explained to him that it was not fair that our owners never benefited from an awareness raising period for this by-law. I was informed that all new owners since 2009 were aware of this by-law and as such, the old owners too. Furthermore, I discussed the non-application of this by-law in the village. I was informed that the by-law did not apply to commercial or municipal properties and that afterwards, the Regroupement indicated that this was not the case.

It is to be noted that the MRC was in an election period during this time and that a new prefect was elected and this person applied the 2009-206 by-law to the letter. So through a combination of circumstances, it gave our sector's property owners the impression that both the municipal and MRC letters were linked, but it was not the case.

Until August 2014, nobody had shared their concerns/comments with me or asked questions following the meetings, multiple emails to the Association members or other written communications (flyers, website, etc.) relating to the environment. It's only at the picnic that one single member approached me and expressed his disapproval.

Following this, I learned that some owners were upset by the municipality's visit because it has not sent a letter advising of its intention beforehand. Moreover, the student had not clearly explained her presence on their property. She simply said that she had a mandate to perform an inspection.

Lac Poisson Blanc was the last lake to be sensitized. Still in the Lac Sainte-Marie municipality, Heney, Sam and Pémichangan lakes were already made aware of the 2009-206 by-law long ago. We were the last. Since owners were not made aware before 2013, four years after this interim by-law was set up, we, as property owners, saw its application by the municipality and the MRC at the very end of the suggested awareness period and came as a surprise.

The latest news is that the Association sent a letter to the Lac Sainte-Marie municipality for the continuation of the matters. According to the Regroupement, the MRC inspections are slowed due to a reduced budget. Given that this by-law reflects the government's policy in regards to shorelines, I believe it will continue its inspections and that it's to our advantage to adjust to this change.

To conclude, I encourage all property owners in Lac Poisson Blanc to become members of the Association. It is committing to keeping its members informed of current events and situations, facilitate exchanges, protect property owner interests and promote partnerships.

To learn more, you can view our website at www.lacpoissonblanc.ca/green-issues/.

Pierre J. Charlebois
(Vice-president)

Summary and explanations of various parties involved and their role(s)

- **Association des Propriétaires du Lac Poisson Blanc (2014) Inc.**

Our Association's mandate is to protect and defend the interests of its owners. It is to ensure our lake's wildlife and ecology are protected and finally, to promote partnerships between users of our nice big lake.

(Source: <http://www.lacpoissonblanc.ca/about-us/>)

- **COBALI (Comité du bassin versant de la rivière du Lièvre) [Lievre River Watershed Committee]**

COBALI is an issue table, and its mission is to protect, improve and value the water resource of the Lièvre river, the Blanche river and Pagé Creek watersheds, and the related resources and habitats, in a context of sustainable development and jointly with those involved in water issues.

(Source: http://www.cobali.org/index_en.php)

- **MRC La Vallée-de-la-Gatineau (RCM: regional county municipality)**

An RCM brings together all the municipalities belonging to a same territory forming an administrative body that is a municipality as defined by the Act respecting municipal territorial organization. The RCMs were established in accordance with the Act Respecting Land use Planning and Development to mainly handle the territory's development. Its role has changed and its powers broadened since its establishment in 1979.

(Sources: <http://www.mamrot.gouv.qc.ca/amenagement-du-territoire/guide-la-prise-de-decision-en-urbanisme/acteurs-et-processus/mrc/> and http://www.mamrot.gouv.qc.ca/pub/amenagement_territoire/documentation/competences_mrc.pdf)

- **Municipalité de Lac Sainte-Marie**

The elected officials are reunited together in a council that represents the population; they make decisions on the municipality's direction and priorities and administer its affairs.

(Source : <http://www.mamrot.gouv.qc.ca/organisation-municipale/organisation-territoriale/instances-municipales/conseil-et-elus/>)

- **Regroupement pour la protection de l'eau de la Vallée-de-la-Gatineau**

The reason of being for the Regroupement is to protect and highlight bodies of water, water ways and ground water on the MRC Vallée-de-la Gatineau's territory in order to contribute to economic prosperity and to the quality of life of its citizens. The pursuit of the Regroupement's mission is based on concentrating on intervening parties in environment, the commitment of the whole of its citizens and the improvement of water science and technology.

(Source : <http://abv7.org/regroupement-protection-eau.php>)

- **RSVL (Réseau de surveillance volontaire des lacs) [Voluntary lake monitoring network]**

The Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs monitoring network evaluates lakes and carries out follow-ups of the trophic status of the lakes (aging stage) in collaboration with associations and organizations working for the protection and the managements of bodies of water.

(Source : http://www.mddelcc.gouv.qc.ca/Eau/eco_aqua/suivi_mil-aqua/rsvl.htm)