



COMMUNIQUE
For immediate release

A solid record of environmental protection measures in Argenteuil

Lachute, March 25, 2009 - The MRC of Argenteuil is proud to report on the implementation of the first phase of its three year environmental protection plan. Upon its approval in January 2008, your elected officials have resolved to move rapidly and have taken the following steps:

- Establishing in February 2008 a MRC advisory committee on environmental matters, responsible for the implementation of the plan;
- Retaining in April 2008 the services of an environmental adviser on a full time basis;
- Tightening in May 2008 the regulations relating to shoreline protection areas;
- Distributing in June 2008 some 15 000 trees for shoreline reforestation and protection;
- Setting up in June 2008 a “Blue Squad”;
- Holding on July 19, 2008 an “Environmental Day”.

The Blue Squad is composed of 4 environmental analysts and has been created to monitor the efficiency of domestic septic installations and the overall state of the shoreline protection areas of twenty some lakes within the MRC's territory. These lakes have been identified following a rigorous selection process based on the best scientific tools available. Close to 1 000 homes in 8 municipalities have been visited and samples were collected off visible information on occupied lots. The precise location of individual septic installations together with the general state of the shoreline natural protection areas were recorded, and photographs were taken in order to assist municipal inspectors in the enforcement of the provincial regulation Q2R8 concerning the private septic installations of remote residences. In the field, the analysts were able to advise home owners as to the best practices when living close to a body of water. This combination of information and persuasion is at the very core of the MRC's approach to environmental protection and it seems to be very well received by the population.

The outcome of this particular operation confirms the relevance of monitoring septic installations and shoreline protection areas. As a matter of fact, the results of this survey clearly show that, not unlike other areas of Québec, a large percentage of the septic installations of isolated residences are obsolete and no longer compliant with 2009 regulations.

As to the quality of shoreline protection areas, amongst more than 600 surveyed lots, numerous artificial modifications, such as cultivated grass and shoreline walls, were noticed. Hence this opportunity for our environmental analysts to convey to property owners the environmental benefits of a natural protection barrier for their shoreline. The MRC wishes to remind all waterfront property owners that the current regulations prohibit any attempt to curb or control the natural growth of vegetation in a shoreline protection area in all the MRC territory. Amongst other prohibited activities, grass cutting, bush

clearing and tree felling are specifically banned. When in doubt, property owners should communicate with their local municipal inspectors.

Since the fall of 2008, your MRC has been partnering with the Programme d'aide à la prévention des algues bleu-vert (PAPA) du ministère des Affaires municipales, des Régions et de l'Occupation du territoire and has hired a person responsible for this project. This government program allows MRCs to plan the implementation of corrective measures when faced with non compliant septic systems affecting bodies of water which have already been affected by algae.

The warden of the MRC and mayor of Saint-André d'Argenteuil, Daniel Beaulieu, has noted with pride these accomplishments as well as the positive response of both citizens and municipalities, adding: "The MRC of Argenteuil's council considers the protection of our « blue gold » to be of the utmost importance, since it constitutes our collective heritage and the basis for the economic and social development of our region. The stakes are not only environmental, but social as well as economic. Finding solutions is our collective responsibility and it requires a change in values, behaviour and habits."

The chairman of the advisory committee on environmental matters of the MRC and the mayor of Gore, Scott Pearce, extended a warm invitation to the population to communicate with the MRC or their own municipalities to find out the complete set of environmental measures, by way of regulations or otherwise, leading to a better environment. As Mayor Pearce added: "The two simplest and most efficient steps to minimize the negative impact of our daily activities on the quality of our lakes are to be found in the efficiency of our domestic septic installations and the integrity of the natural shoreline protection areas."

For the present year, the MRC intends to continue the implementation of this plan. The committee has already singled out the following priorities:

- The implementation of a corrective plan within the framework of the PAPA program to support municipalities which have to take remedial action;
- The completion of a thorough survey of the status of the protection areas of our lakes;
- The annual Environmental Day;
- The preparation of a template regulation on the spreading of fertilisers and pesticides;
- The setting up of meetings between the environmental committee, developers and real estate professionals;
- The distribution of trees for plantation in shoreline protective areas.

An information meeting for waterfront lot owners associations will be held on Wednesday, April 22, 2009 at 7 PM at the Arena Kevin Lowe-Pierre Pagé, located at 80, Hamford St. in Lachute.

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