



Magog, February 15, 2023

## **No to the discharge of American leachate, still containing PFAS, into Lake Memphremagog**

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Memphremagog Conservation (MCI), a non-profit working for the preservation of Lake Memphremagog and its watershed, is worried. Recently, the American landfill site in Coventry, situated near Lake Memphremagog, was authorized to build a plant to treat the leachate (garbage juice) flowing from the site. This 'treated' water will necessarily be discharged into Lake Memphremagog, source of drinking water for 175,000 Quebeckers.

The science tells us that this effluent, even 'treated', will still contain pollutants, in particular PFAS, also called forever pollutants, which are chemical contaminants dangerous to human health. Already, traces of these PFAS have been found in the water intakes for the Cities of Magog and Sherbrooke, who get their water directly from Lake Memphremagog.

Note that these PFAS are chemicals that do not break down in the environment and can persist for decades or even longer. As well, they accumulate in living organisms, causing damage to human and animal health. PFAS are significant endocrine disruptors.

We and our Vermont colleagues from the group DUMP (Don't Undermine Memphremagog Purity) have been fighting like David against Goliath on this issue. We must defend this drinking water reservoir which is in both Canada and the United States. But are our elected officials willing to fight? **Will they wait until it is too late to act?**

To the Ministers of the Environment of Canada and Québec, we are asking you to protect the health of those who elected you as well as future generations.

### **What the Government of Canada can do**

On the Canadian side, the 'Law on the treaty on international boundary waters' is not enforced. This law, promulgated by a treaty signed over 100 years ago, clearly stipulates that one country cannot pollute the other. In the present case that is exactly what is happening.

It is unacceptable that contaminated water coming from the United States, containing PFAS, pollutes Canadian waters. **Leachate must be diverted from the Lake Memphremagog watershed forever.**

For the moment, the Canadian Environment Minister, Mr. Steven Guilbeault, is taking no action. There also exists international jurisprudence on the precaution principle to protect a country from being polluted by another. Why isn't this legal tool being used?

Shouldn't the International Joint Commission be brought in to settle this issue?

## **What the Government of Québec can do**

In 2021, the National Assembly unanimously voted a motion demanding ‘the permanent interdiction of treated leachate into the Lake Memphremagog watershed (...)’.

**Mr. Charrette, how can you justify your government’s non-respect of this commitment?**

**Vermont’s legal procedures allowed Québec to appeal the issuance of the permit to build an experimental leachate treatment plant. Québec did not appeal** Why? Mr. Charette, does not your ministry commit itself, via its web site to be ‘(...) guardian (of water) for the benefit of current and future generations’? How do you justify this inaction?

How can our governments endorse the construction of an American experimental leachate treatment plant with no guarantee on the quality of the treatment, the effluent of which will inevitably and irremediably pollute Lake Memphremagog?

## **MCI’s demands**

MCI demands the application of the international right to the precaution principle in this issue to protect the lake, the environment and human health. MCI wants the governments of Canada and Québec to intervene with the governments of Vermont and the United States to ensure that ‘treated’ leachate not be released into the Lake Memphremagog watershed.

We have called on all the elected officials accountable and likely to act on this issue in our press release of January 23rd. We have personally written to the federal Member of Parliament for Brome-Mississquoi. We have met with our provincial MNA on two occasions. To date, no concrete action has been undertaken by our elected officials, and the appeals deadline has come and gone.

**Our elected officials should, for the benefit of current and future generations, live up to their duties and obligations. Note that the committee of elected officials from Lake Memphremagog, created specifically to deal with the Coventry issue, will be meeting this coming February 20<sup>th</sup>. We expect to see a clear strategy to oppose the discharge of leachate effluent into our lake, nothing less.**

## ***Memphremagog Conservation***



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Johanne Lavoie  
Volunteer president



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Pascale Bédard  
Vice-President



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Robert Benoit  
Outgoing President