



Photo: Hubert Simard

Information Letter

June 2005

# President's Message

The past twelve months have probably been the busiest in MCI's recent history.

Last summer our project "Operation Healthy Lake - Phase I" under the leadership of Board member Robert Benoit completed, on time and within budget, one of the most comprehensive and expensive studies ever undertaken on the Lake. If you would like to view the results of the study or zoom in on any particular section of the lake, you can do this by going to our web site or by ordering a CD of the study.

This summer will see "Operation Healthy Lake - Phase II" begin; (the "action taken" phase). It will include work in the field and other actions initiated.

In December of last year, Minister Thomas Mulcair called for a BAPE hearing on the matter of a proposed land exchange within the boundaries of Mont Orford National Park. At this juncture MCI Vice-President, Gisèle Lacasse Benoit, spearheaded a group of many other environmental organizations to oppose the idea

of a promoter to exchange parcels of parkland in order to facilitate the building of a gigantic development in the Park.

An extraordinary amount of time and effort goes into this type of battle and some expense as well. In all, 202 MCI hours were spent attending BAPE hearings and additional hearings which followed. Not included are the hours it took Vice-President Benoit to prepare both a 51-page brief and organizing a petition which brought in more than 8000 signatures. I would like to thank our many members who signed petitions and recruited others to do the same. Your support lifted our spirits at an important time.

The BAPE decision was considered by the press as a loss for the promoter. Although buoyed by this view, as we go to press the Government has yet to come down with a ruling.

The Coventry, Vt. proposed dump site expansion has been given the green light by the Vermont State Government. We have been unsuccessful getting Minister Stéphane Dion to involve the International Joint Commission. His view: Vermont's landfill regulations are more rigorous than those of Québec. Our view: The place for an expanded dump is not on the shores of Lake Memphremagog because eventually the site will leak. We will continue the fight to prevent further expansion.

We invite you to log on to our newly-designed web site. We think you will find it a considerable improvement and a great source for timely information. We also hope you like the new look of the MCI yearly newsletter you have in your hands. When you fill in your membership form could you include your e-mail address? We promise you: No Spam.

I will be stepping down as President following our Annual General Meeting in August. It has been an eventful two years with many issues tackled successfully. For our successes, I am indebted to our Board of unselfish individuals for their hard work and wise counsel.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Board may I express its deep appreciation to you, our MCI members, for your continued splendid support: both moral and financial.

*Donald Fisher  
President*

## Protection of Mont-Orford National Park

*As we are writing these lines, the cabinet's decision regarding the future of Mont-Orford National Park has yet to be made.*



photo: Hubert Simard

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## Operation Healthy Lake Memphremagog (Phase I)

*MCI is proud to announce the publication of the report from Operation Healthy Lake Study (Phase I), done in collaboration with RAPPEL and Sherbrooke University.*



photo: Jacques Boisvert

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## General assembly

*This year our Annual General Meeting will be held in the Austin Town Hall Council chambers, 21 chemin Millington, Austin on Saturday, August 6th, beginning at 0930. Come out and meet the Board and talk about the issues that are important to you.*



photo: Hubert Simard

## MCI Web Site [www.memphremagog.org](http://www.memphremagog.org)

For additional information on MCI activities please go to our web site. There, among other postings, you will find the complete version of our "Operation Healthy Lake - Phase I" study, plus the complete version of the MCI brief presented at the BAPE Mont-Orford hearings.

## Operation Healthy Lake Memphremagog (Phase I)

MCI is proud to announce the publication of the report from Operation Healthy Lake Study (Phase I), done in collaboration with RAPPEL and Sherbrooke University. With a total budget of \$60,000, Phase I was completed thanks to the generous help of numerous donors, as well as that of Fisheries & Oceans Canada and the Canadian Human Resources Development Summer Career Program.

### The Study

Prepared at the request of MCI, this study aims at drawing a complete picture of Lake Memphremagog's state of health while taking specific parameters into account. These include: the **state of the littoral**, the **state of the shoreline**, the **quality of deep waters** and the **quality of its tributaries**. During the summer of 2004, a RAPPEL team comprised of biologists and students in Applied Ecology traveled and inventoried the 120 Km shoreline on the Québec side of the lake by taking samples at 1m, 2m, and 3m depths along the shoreline. Data regarding sediments (type and average thickness), plants (density and species), algae at the bottom (periphyton's density), and the level of artificial planning on the banks was gathered at each of these marks on sections which were



Photo: Jacques Boisvert

100 meters long and two meters wide on average. On the whole, approximately **3,000 sections of littoral** were inventoried and geo-referenced. Results obtained were then supplemented with a literature review of recent studies concerning the quality of deep waters in lakes and their tributaries. These studies were carried out by Québec's Sustainable Development and Environment Ministry (MENV) and by the Memphremagog MRC.

### Results

Results from Operation Healthy Lake (Phase I) show that Lake Memphremagog manifests **symptoms of premature eutrophication** in certain areas. The sectors of **Magog Bay**, **Southière-sur-le-lac**, **Three-Sisters** and **Fitch Bay (Long Bay and North Eastern part)** all constitute problem areas which must be addressed as a priority in any plan aimed at reducing the number of sources of degradation. **Thirty-two zones** fit that description on the whole of the lake. However, even the healthiest or least affected areas (central part of the lake near Owl's Head) are starting to show signs of degradation. For instance, organic matter is beginning to form a deposit on the rocks at the bottom (a clear sign of ongoing siltation).

Lake Memphremagog is submitted to **human pressures** which exceed its capacities for absorption, making it age prematurely. With this in mind, it is important to act quickly to limit its imminent degradation and stop the loss of ecological and other activities that inevitably follows. Shoreline erosion control, a careful watch over the tributaries' run-offs and a reduction of nutrients carried into the lake are essential and recommendations to this effect can be found in the report. All the **local players** must act together. Be they shoreline residents, local administrators (MRC and municipal), farmers, foresters or business people, all can implement concrete initiatives to limit their own negative impact on the lake and its tributaries. Particular attention must be paid to the **preservation and restoration of the shoreline**, the **management**

**of used waters and ditches**, as well as the **fertilization of surrounding lands**. However, the importance of acting in a preventive manner so as to preserve zones which are still healthy or less damaged should also be kept in mind. After all, the lesser the degradation, the easier it is to put a stop to it and restore the milieu.

### Taking Action

Considering the lake's current state of health, MCI has launched **Phase II** of the Operation. This phase will consist in preparing a plan of action, collecting further data in priority areas and restoring the lake's shoreline. As a result, MCI organized a meeting on May 7, 2005, where mayors, councillors and municipal inspectors from around the lake gathered to discuss possible solutions to the present situation. On June 18, 2005, MCI will also host a similar meeting, this time calling upon 40 associations and groups around Lake Memphremagog to gather and propose solutions to tackle the problems we now face. Also during the summer of 2005, an awareness campaign regarding shoreline restoration will be launched. Moreover, Fitch Bay (North Eastern part) will be prioritized as part of the SAGE program (which consists in drawing a global plan of action aimed at improving the quality of the water). Lastly, a master's thesis project will be set up to study both Southière-sur-le-lac and the Magog Bay areas, in collaboration with the Environment & Sustainable Development Observatory from Sherbrooke University.

Individuals who wish to obtain the results of Operation Healthy Lake, may log on to: [www.memphremagog.org](http://www.memphremagog.org). The study is also available on CD and can be purchased for \$8.00 (including delivery). To order, please e-mail your request to: [info@memphremagog.org](mailto:info@memphremagog.org).

*Robert Benoit,  
Board member*

### Useful telephone numbers:

**Ministère de l'environnement de l'Estrie:**  
(819) 820-3882 or address complaints to  
Robert Goulet: (819) 820-3882 poste 264

**Urgence environnement:** (866) 694-5454

**Urgence Faune:** (800) 463-2191

**MRC Memphremagog Patrouille nautique:**  
(819) 620-7669 / (819) 821-0435

### Municipal inspectors:

**Austin**  
Stephen Nicholson: (819) 843-2388

**Potton**  
Marie-Claude Lamy: (450) 292-3313

**City of Magog**  
Sylvain Thomas, chef de service,  
Christian Lamoureux: (819) 843-7106

**City of Magog, Canton de Magog sector**  
Daniel Charron  
Daniel Couture: (819) 843-3286

**Canton de Stanstead**  
Luc Savard: (819) 876-2948

**Ogden**  
Gilles Bélanger: (819) 876-7117

**City of Stanstead**  
Julie Desnoyers: (819) 876-7181



As we are writing these lines, the cabinet's decision regarding the future of Mont-Orford National Park has yet to be made.

Here is a brief summary of the events of the last few months in this important file.

In December of 2004, Thomas J. Mulcair, Minister responsible for Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks, mandated the *Bureau d'audiences publiques en Environnement* (BAPE) to obtain a response to the following question: What are the repercussions of a land swap on the biodiversity and integrity of Mont-Orford National Park?

The first stage of these hearings was held from December 13-15, 2004. This first stage was dedicated to the presentation of briefs written by the promoters and officials from the Ministry of Natural Resources, Fauna and Parks.

The second stage of the hearings was held February 1-4, 2005. Interested associations and individuals could then present their briefs.

On March 15, 2005, the BAPE presented its report to Mr. Mulcair. Eight days later, on March 23, the Minister released the report. On that day, MCI board members and other people who had authored briefs handed in a petition with – then – 7, 241 signatures. Today, this group has gathered more than 8, 300 signatures asking that the *Law on Parks* be respected.

The BAPE's conclusions<sup>1</sup> were that – to various extents – the land swap and the proposed construction that would ensue would constitute a breach in the ecological integrity of Mont-Orford National Park. The Commission also stated that it would be best if the *Law on Parks* were re-defined in order to clarify what is perceived by the general public as the administrator's ambiguous position with regard to the territory's permanent protection.

The Commission issued twelve recommendations among which:

**Recommendation 2: "... in light of a complete biophysical inventory, there is no guarantee that the proposed land swap would be without repercussions on the preservation of biodiversity."**

**Recommendation 3: "...would open the area located at the foot of the ski slopes and Castle Brook to renewed anthropological pressures contrary to the objectives assigned to the preservation of parkland."**

**Recommendation 4: "... the construction of housing units above a certain altitude could alter the integrity of Mont-Orford National Park's natural countryside."**

**Recommendation 6: "... the Sinuous Brook area should be protected in its entirety because it supports a wooded area which – due to its composition and age – is unique in the Mont-Orford National Park."**

Following the recommendations of the Commission, Mr. Mulcair set up a discussion table so that various options acceptable to the whole of the population could be studied and a consensus be reached.

The BAPE's report is clear and thorough enough to prevent any breach in the ecological and territorial integrity of the park.

MCI decided to take action to ensure that respect be paid to the *Law on Parks* as well as its spirit since both exist to protect such areas. The territory of a national park must remain inviolate; this social agreement was reached a long time ago and should not be breached in any way.

Furthermore, the ski station and proposed housing project are located along Castle Brook, one of the most important tributaries to flow into the Magog Bay. The project would require that 180 acres of wooded area be cut down, 40 acres of which in clear cutting – resulting in major modifications to the water system of Castle Brook while harming this important Lake Memphremagog tributary.

The future in this matter now rests in the hands of politicians.

To conclude, we hope that the government's decision will be guided by the spirit of its own Policy for Sustainable Development, as expressed by our Premier, Jean Charest: "While we make decisions today, we are thinking of our children and of the Québec we will be leaving behind for them."<sup>2</sup> Clearly, it is a matter of embracing the long term view instead of the short one with its dubious promise of quick economic benefits.

*Gisèle Lacasse Benoit*  
Vice-President

To read the Official Report:  
<http://www.bape.gouv.qc.ca/sections/rapports/publications/bape209.pdf>

<sup>1</sup>Québec, March 2005. Bureau d'audiences publiques en Environnement. Report no 209. *The Repercussions of a Land Swap on the Biodiversity and Integrity of Mont-Orford National Park*

<sup>2</sup>Québec Government, November 2004. *Shine Among the Best. Québec's Sustainable Development Plan*

## Heritage Circle

MCI recognizes the generosity of those who enrolled in the Heritage Circle member category in the years 2004 and/or 2005.

## Coventry Landfill

It appears that monster garbage dumps will continue to threaten the health of Lake Memphremagog.

First there was the Bestan site near Magog that, after strong political and public opposition, has been all but closed. Then, last year, Vermont authorities heard applications by New England Waste Services of Vermont (NEWSVT), operators of a landfill dump on the outskirts of Newport, to expand the size of their operation and increase their allowable annual tonnage from 217,000 metric tons to 335,000 metric tons. That's a lot of garbage and a significant development for a dump that we already feel is in the wrong place and should be phased out to protect the long-term health of Lake Memphremagog.

Essentially, our concerns are for the long-term. NEWSVT is proposing the latest technology including double membranes, and regular monitoring of the surrounding water table. What they cannot guarantee is that the technology will continue to function properly well into the future and while the toxic nature of the waste remains in the ground. This method of handling municipal waste has not existed long enough to develop a safety record so we're not confident that it won't pollute the lake of our children, and our children's children.

The MRC Memphremagog joined with the City of Sherbrooke to oppose the application and was granted formal intervener status in the hearings. MCI decided to support their efforts and throughout 2004 we monitored the hearings closely.

NEWSVT has now received permission to enlarge the dump and increase the tonnage. Several important conditions were placed on the company including the requirement that they pay \$1.00 a ton into a post-post closure fund. This fund is intended to provide long-term financial resources to monitor the dump and repair any problems that might occur after it is full.

Appeals launched by NEWSVT are underway to challenge the post-post \$1.00 a ton requirement. You can keep up-to-date on developments at [www.memphremagog.org](http://www.memphremagog.org).

*Wilder Lewis*  
Vice-President

## Membership 2005

Last year, a fruitful financing campaign aimed at raising membership levels in the Austin, Ogden, Stanstead Township and Newport areas helped us increase our numbers by 40%. This year, we are following up on this effort by targeting residents in the Potton, Magog and Magog Township areas. The financial health of our organization depends solely on our membership and that is why we will undertake every effort to make sure that residents and lake users know about MCI.

The Board wishes to extend its most sincere thanks for the financial support you provide us since it allows us to be leaders in the field. A special thank you goes to the Heritage Circle members who contributed specifically to finance Operation Healthy Lake. This financial help allowed us to reach our goals.

Help us increase our numbers by inviting a friend or a neighbor to become a member of Memphremagog Conservation. This modest contribution, added to that of our volunteers, is not much to help protect this exceptional and

irreplaceable landmark that is our Lake and its surroundings. Let's not forget that the economic health of our region, largely based on tourism, depends on the preservation of the environmental quality of this natural milieu.

*Gisèle Lacasse-Benoit*  
Vice-President

## Lake Patrol 2004-2005

The MCI lake patrollers were very busy during the 2004 season, visiting shoreline residents, marinas and public wharfs and attending community activities. Day camps were visited to bring an environmental message to this important age group. The patrollers met many people, providing an opportunity to discuss and inform on various matters concerning the lake. Many promotional articles were sold, pamphlets and membership applications distributed, and general information provided. The patrollers also took water samples for the Provincial Environment Ministry and assisted on the Healthy Lake Project – Phase I

The Lake Patrol's main areas of activity for 2005 will be the following: promotion, water quality monitoring and information exchange. The Patrol will devote more time to increasing its presence on the US side of the lake and travelling on land more so than before to better their chances of meeting people who may live close to the lake but spend little time on the lakefront. They will also monitor aquatic plants and sediment growth at five assigned locations as a continuation of the Healthy Lake Project - Phase I

In recent years, many people have expressed concern about users who disrespect lake and shoreline regulations. It is not the role of the patrollers to confront the guilty parties and it is usually too late to react by the time they arrive. Their role in most cases is simply to provide contact information so the situation may be dealt with in a timely manner by the witnesses. In some cases, the Patrol will pass along complaints to municipal inspectors. In addition, patrollers are asked to provide information on various matters such as shoreline protection and restoration, pesticides, current events around the lake, etc. When available, brochures giving answers to these queries will be handed out. Some answers will be found on our MCI website.

We ask you to welcome our patrollers should you meet them. If you would like them to pass by, please phone them on their cell at (819) 620-3939 or Pat Trudel at (450) 292-3550.

*Pat Trudel*  
Board member

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