



Photo: Hubert Simard

Information Letter

June 2006

# President's Message

Dear Members,

This past year has been a very active one for MCI with a multitude of sensitive files in which we have taken an active part. We are happy with what we have accomplished since June 2005. Our greatest success was unquestionably the completion of the study called *Operation Healthy Lake* on the Vermont end of the Lake. This allowed us to develop a portrait of the condition of the entire Lake. The successful completion of the SAGE program in Fitch Bay, the Master's project in collaboration with the environmental and sustainable development observatory of the Université de Sherbrooke, the courses in replanting of the shoreline, and workshops and meetings with the associations are some of the concrete actions that have come out of the Action Plan of the first phase of this important study.

We have also played an active part in helping to protect the ecological and territorial integrity

of Orford Provincial Park which has become a rallying symbol for thousands of Quebecers. We have turned our attention to projects that have affected the health of the lake, such as the construction of the Club de Golf Memphrémagog, illegal cutting of trees on the shore and the proposed expansion of landfill sites. MCI maintains contacts with elected officials to make them aware of our concerns about environmental problems affecting the quality of the lake. We have elected to work closely with them since they have the powers to act directly to protect our environment.

We encourage you to keep an eye on changes to the upcoming land use and development plan of the MRC to ensure that development in the region is not at the expense of the protection of the environment and the quality of life.

To enable you to play an active and concrete part in protecting the Lake, we are preparing a *Code of Ethics for residents of the lake watershed*. We suggest that you review your behaviour as watershed property owners, and change any practices that could harm the quality of the Lake.

To conclude, we note the passing of two of MCI's greatest contributors and most ardent

defenders of the Lake. Mr. Stewart Hopps died on October 5, 2005. He was one of the first to join the founders of MCI and he gave more than 50 years to protecting the Lake. In 2005, MCI created a prize in memory of Gordon Kohl, a founder of MCI; Mr. Hopps was the first recipient of this prize. The region lost another towering figure, Mr. Jacques Boisvert, the father of *Memphré*, our friendly monster of the deep. He died on February 5, 2006. His 7000 dives here led him to speak about the fragility of the Lake – and its deterioration. MCI today pays tribute to these two pioneers of environmental protection in our region.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the members of the board of directors for their remarkable work. We would also like to thank those who are members of MCI - your moral and financial support is of the utmost importance to our cause. And now, may we wish all of you a good summer.

Gisèle Lacasse-Benoît  
Présidente

## Mont-Orford National Park

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Photo: Yves Tremblay

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## Follow-up to Operation Healthy Lake - 2004

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## General Assembly

This year our Annual General Meeting will be held at The Murray Memorial Centre in Georgeville on Saturday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 9:30 AM. Come out and meet the Board and talk about the issues that are important to you.



## MCI Web Site – memphremagog.org

Additional MCI information is available on our web site. Two important new studies have been recently posted: **Operation Healthy Lake – Vermont** study and **MCI Fitch Bay SAGE** study. To receive timely e-mail news, join our MCI "Infoletter" programme.

## Follow-up to Operation Healthy Lake - 2004



In 2004, in cooperation with RAPPEL, MCI carried out the most important study ever on the Canadian side of Lake Memphremagog, called **Operation Healthy Lake**. A number of the recommendations of this study were followed starting in the summer of 2005.

The Fitch Bay sector, identified as one of the most degraded sectors of the lake, became our first priority. MCI therefore undertook a study called the SAGE program, (Schéma d'action globale pour l'eau) by making a complete inventory of the drainage basin. This action was made possible thanks to the initiative of Mrs. Sandra Marshall, a resident of Fitch Bay, with the cooperation of some citizens, the financial support of the municipality and supervision by RAPPEL.

The results of the SAGE study were presented to the municipal council and citizens in the spring

of 2005, to allow study of the actions to be taken and the recommendations to be implemented.

The second sector of the lake that was identified as a major trouble spot was the northern part of the Lake. We have financed the research of a Master's level student who is being supervised by Dr. Olivier Thomas, Ph.D., director of the environment and sustainable development observatory of the Université de Sherbrooke. The object of this project is to draw up an overall portrait of Magog Bay and present a critical analysis of land use planning and development practices in a tourism zone in relation to sustainable development criteria. The conclusions of this research are expected in the spring of 2007.

One of MCI's objectives is to pull together our knowledge of the environment so everyone can use it, and can take action working with stakeholders in the region. For the past two years, we have held study days where we have brought together mayors, councillors, municipal inspectors and directors of lakefront property owners' associations.

As was the case last year, in 2006 we are planning to carry out the inventory of aquatic plants as part of the annual update of our study. We are also doing water quality sampling and analysis for the Quebec environment ministry, the MDDEP.

MCI is also offering a replanting program to citizens and lakefront property-owners'

associations who wish to set up education and training programs on renaturalizing the shoreline. Please visit our website to learn more about our services or to contact Philippe, the person in charge of these programs.

*Robert Benoit*  
Board member

### 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

## Operation Healthy Lake - Vermont



In May, 2005, MCI Board member Robert Benoit and the undersigned attended a meeting of the Québec-Vermont Steering Committee for the Management of Lake Memphremagog, commonly referred to as "The Québec-Vermont Agreement".

At the meeting MCI was asked to present its "Operation Healthy Lake" study executed in Québec by RAPPEL in 2004. Given by RAPPEL, it was greeted enthusiastically by the Vermont participants. When MCI offered to help pay for the same study to be carried out in Vermont, Canute Dalmasse, Deputy Secretary, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, quickly agreed. Subsequent discussions led to Vermont

shouldering two-thirds of the \$21,000 cost; MCI one-third.

With the Québec experience MCI and RAPPEL were fully prepared to carry out field operations in Vermont. However, MCI had no experience with respect to what lay ahead to gain permission for a Canadian team to execute a Canadian study in American waters.

With regulations tightened following 9/11, MCI spent many hours completing all the steps necessary for the RAPPEL team members to secure TN visas. Contact with both Waterbury, VT and Washington D.C. was a daily affair over two months as we satisfied rules required by: Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Immigration, NAFTA, Educational qualifications of our team, Insurance coverage and more. Ever cautious, we made a dry run rehearsal to U.S. Customs with the RAPPEL team to make sure we had all our ducks in order. It is worth noting that during all dealings with our American friends we received unflinching friendly and helpful cooperation.

On May 8, 2006, MCI held French and English press conferences at the Gateway Center in Newport, VT at which time Camille Rivard-Sirois, RAPPEL team leader, presented the results of "Operation Healthy Lake - Vermont". As with the earlier Québec study, the Vermont sector shows significant symptoms of erosion and accelerated eutrophication. Much of the shoreline has been cleared and de-naturalized. Three main tributaries bring worrisome phosphorous and suspended matter into the lake. Six zones have been classified as a top priority. The report contains a list of possible solutions to these problems.

The completion of the Vermont study resulted in a historic event; it celebrated for the first time a study examining the health of Lake Memphremagog in its entirety. For the full report (Vermont) or to purchase a CD-ROM please visit our MCI website.

*Donald Fisher*  
Vice-President

## Mont-Orford National Park



In June, 2005, the Bureau d'audiences publiques en environnement (the BAPE) made public its report, the conclusion of which was that the proposed exchange of properties and the construction of housing units would harm the ecological integrity of the park. On March 6, the Minister of sustainable development, environment and parks announced that he would table a special draft bill to sell by public tender, 648 hectares of Mont-Orford park, including Orford, Giroux and Alfred Desrochers Mountains to allow the construction of 1000 housing units.

This decision was hasty and astonishing, because even the promoters had never asked for this much! By proceeding in this way, the government is bypassing the Parks Act which provides for this territory to be **preserved in perpetuity** and **makes the sale of lands in the park illegal**. Thus it flies in the face of the democratic process that applies for any such important decision: the obligation to hold public hearings when the limits of a park are changed, consultation of various inter-ministerial committees and a democratic debate in the caucus.

Furthermore, before ceding these lands to the Ministry of Public Lands, the government has a legal obligation to prove they are no longer important for conservation. We know the land leased to the ski centre is 80% wooded and for 8 months of each year, nature **triumphs over human activities**.

The reason invoked by the government for this decision is that the ski centre was running at a deficit. As evidence, the Minister presented the financial statements of the promoter without even assessing the quality of the management of the centre. The coalition SOS Parc Orford, of which MCI is an active member, has compared these figures with those of the other major ski centres in Quebec. The finding: exaggerated expenditures, hence questionable management choices. A well-managed ski centre would give an annual profit. In terms of job creation, the proposed condo development could be done outside the park on other land held by the promoter at the edge of the southern flank of Mont Giroux. The second argument of the government is that a ski centre and a golf course have no place in a park, but the double mission of conservation and recreation has been part of the history of this park since it was created, and there is a social consensus for it.

This hastily conceived and ill-prepared proposed project by the Charest government has received unprecedented media coverage and negative commentary from the Quebec press. In just a few weeks, the coalition SOS Parc Orford received the support of 75,000 citizens and 107 associations and environmental, political, social and union groups. The actions taken have showed massive and spontaneous opposition by citizens to this project to privatize part of our natural heritage. A first demonstration of 3,000 persons took place at Orford on March 26, followed by a benefit concert organized by Clémence Desrochers, with a number of artists performing to a full house in Sherbrooke. On April 22, a record number of over 12,000 people turned out for a protest march in Montreal.

This regional file has become a major issue at the provincial and national level. We reiterate our demand that the government respect the Parks Act and withdraw its draft bill for special legislation. We continue to hope that this tidal wave of social disapproval will convince the government to reassess its position and to respect the wishes of the pioneers who created the park in 1938 to **preserve these lands from human settlement**.

*Gisèle Lacasse-Benoît*  
President

## Golf Club

*Full version on MCI web site*

The Club de golf Memphrémagog, a private club, is being built 2 km from the Lake. It is unfortunate that in 2003, despite the opposition of the CPTAQ, the Quebec administrative tribunal reversed its decision and gave the green light to allow the land to be dezoned, thereby withdrawing 282.5 acres from the green zone, and permitting the clear-cutting of 150 acres of mature maples. The drainage basin of the lake lost a large area of forest cover and this has caused significant environmental impacts for the Lake.

MCI noted that the golf club has received three notices of infraction and that this file is now in the hands of the investigations department of the MDDEP. MCI therefore voted for a resolution asking the MRC de Memphrémagog, the Ville de Magog and the MDDEP to have the work halted

immediately until all forms of contamination to Lake Memphrémagog were totally controlled. We also asked that the site conform to the required standards set out in the certificate of authorization of the MDDEP and to ensure that the owners of the Club de Golf Memphrémagog secure the construction site before the onset of winter to protect Lake Memphrémagog against the erosion foreseeable during the autumn rains and high waters of spring.

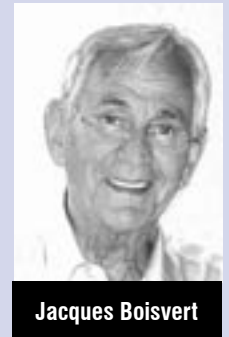
Will the actions taken by the authorities be vigorous enough? MCI will remain vigilant.

*Gisèle Lacasse-Benoît*  
President

## IN MEMORIAM



Stewart Hopps



Jacques Boisvert

Photo: Jacques Courtemanche

## Heritage Circle

MCI recognizes the generosity of those who enrolled in the Heritage Circle member category in the years 2005 and/or 2006.

## Intersan Dumpsite

*Full version on MCI web site*

In December, 2005, Intersan, the company that manages the landfill site in Magog, presented an application for a permit to open a new site on its Magog property. After two refusals, this time the company asked for an annual capacity of 60,000 tonnes.

MCI's resolution lists the reasons for its opposition to this new application by Intersan. Notwithstanding the improvement in the

technology or alleged benefit that could accrue to our region, our long-term position is that there is no place in the drainage basin of Lake Memphremagog for a landfill site. As you will remember, we also defended this position in the case of the enlargement of the Coventry, Vermont dumpsite.

According to the MRC de Memphrémagog, the proposal could be presented at public hearings of the BAPE at the beginning of 2007. Below is the conclusion of a resolution adopted by MCI and transmitted to mayors in the MRC in February, 2006.

*MCI asks the mayors of the MRC Memphrémagog to refuse the proposed enlargement of the Intersan site and find alternative solutions for garbage disposal for landfill outside the drainage basin of Lake Memphremagog*

*Madeleine Saint-Pierre  
Vice- President*

## Have you Renewed your Membership in MCI?

*Full version on MCI web site*

Since 2004, we have been making efforts to recruit new members, which brought in 10% additional members in 2004 and 8% in 2005. This year, we are again trying to increase our numbers to be more representative of the residents and users of the Lake. The campaign will continue this year in the municipalities of Ogden and Stanstead Township. We feel the better we are able to create increased awareness among new members about the health of the Lake and water quality, the bigger the positive impact will be on our efforts to protect the Lake. Please take a few minutes to renew your membership in MCI by completing the attached form. You can also help by encouraging others to become members. If you have any questions, please contact one of our Board members.

*Louise Lapointe  
Board member*

## The Land Use Planning and Development Program for the MRC Memphrémagog

*Full version on MCI web site*

The MRC Memphrémagog has started the process of amending its land use and development plan. In the document *Vision de développement*, on page 13, we see that the MRC wants to dezone class 7 lands representing 37% of the territory of the MRC. This is very troubling and we are therefore asking you to

keep an eye on the amendments to the land use and development plan of the MRC and the planning program of your municipality in the coming months. We urge you to become a member of the planning advisory committee in your own municipality and to attend the various consultation meetings. The coming years will be crucial for the protection or further deterioration of our natural environment and, as a result, of our quality of life.

*Gisèle Lacasse-Benoît  
President*

## Lake Patrol – 2005-2006

The 2005 summer was one of the most productive ever for the MCI patrollers, Mona Elzarka and Emmanuelle Danserault. The warm weather permitted them to circulate around the Lake and meet more people than in recent summers, in addition to making the water testing programs easier.

Before the start of the season, our patrollers held meetings with the inspectors of each Canadian township around the lake, Potton, Austin, Magog, Stanstead and Ogden. It was agreed the MCI patrol would be the "eyes and ears" on the water for the inspectors. Equipped with GPS and a cell phone, we were able to assist in identifying and locating areas with potential problems.

Our patrollers carried out four water tests in 10 locations on the Lake for the MDDEP as part of an annual program. In addition, samples of water plants were taken in selected areas as a continuation of the *Operation Healthy Lake – 2004* study. The MCI patrollers had greater visibility on the US side of the lake by assisting in the *Operation Healthy Lake - Vermont 2005* project and by visiting lakeside residents.

The patrollers visited several day camps in Mansonville, Georgeville, Plage Southière, Cedar Lodge and Hermitage Club. They were very well received and had the opportunity to inform parents and children about marine and plant life, water flow and erosion, and environmental issues around the Lake.

This summer we will carry on with last year's program and promote shoreline vegetation. As always, please welcome the MCI patrollers when you meet them. You are welcome to ask any questions about the Lake. They also have interesting articles for sale as well as free information brochures on many topics. We urge you to report any problems concerning the lake by referring to the contact information contained in our newsletter and our website.

*Pat Trudel  
Treasurer*

## MCI Board Members (2005-2006)

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*President*  
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**Andy Cowell**  
*Georgeville*  
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**Donald R. Fisher**  
*Vice-president*  
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**Jean-Claude Duff**  
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**Jacques Charbonneau**  
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**Madeleine Saint-Pierre**  
*Vice-president*  
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**Louise Lapointe**  
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**David Monty**  
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**Pat Trudel**  
*Treasurer*  
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**Wilder Lewis**  
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**John Ward**  
Newport  
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**Tom Fletcher**  
*Secretary*  
Magog  
(819) 868-8890

**Jan Lundgren**  
Austin  
(450) 292-3964

**Renée Joyal**  
Magog  
(819) 843-5846

## Useful Telephone Numbers:

**Ministère du Développement durable, Environnement et Parcs (Estrie):**  
(819) 820-3882  
Emergencies: Yvan Tremblay, poste 248  
Technical Issues: Richard Smith, poste 253

**Patrouille nautique de la MRC Memphrémagog:**  
(819) 620-7669 / (819) 821-0435

**Urgence environnement Québec 24 hours:**  
(866) 694-5454

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

**MCI Lake Patrol:** (819) 620-3939

## New!

MCI phone number has changed to:  
(819) 340-8721