



11 July 2017

The Friends of the Gatineau River (FOG) is a nonprofit, volunteer-based organization working with community partners to conserve, protect and improve the environmental quality of the Gatineau River watershed for the benefit of current and future generations. FOG conducts water quality tests of the Gatineau River as a public service with support from the municipalities of La Pêche, Cantley and Chelsea and clubs and associations that use the river for recreational purposes. FOG membership, over 250 citizens from these communities, are keen promoters of a healthy Gatineau River.

We thank you for the opportunity to again provide input into this important process. The proposed amendments to the MRC land use and development plan have potential impacts on the health of the environment, and in particular on the Gatineau River. Given our experience of water quality testing for over 16 years we are very cognizant of the fact that the Gatineau is a precious resource and that all significant development, such as that proposed for Mont Cascades, carries the potential to increase pressures on aquatic ecology and water quality. It is acknowledged that development of housing and recreation facilities will occur in the Mont Cascades area over the coming years. By adopting a sustainable development approach at this point in the process, this development can result in thriving communities and recreational facilities while reducing potential impacts on the long-term health of the Gatineau River. FOG looks to the MRC and its municipal government members to provide leadership in achieving sustainable development along the shores of the Gatineau river. We would like to point to areas that are of particular concern to FOG and its membership:

- household and business sewage, and water park runoff
- storm water run-off (bringing sediment from land erosion caused by clearing of forests for housing and ski hills, and chemicals and fertilizers from housing and recreational facilities into, the river)
- shoreline development (loss of ecologically intact riparian zones)
- increased boat access and boating on the river (impacts on wildlife,

shoreline stabilization, increased exposure to invasive species and safety for young and old participants in non-motorized watersports programs in the Cascades area)

There are other areas of concern that will not be addressed by FOG here such as light pollution and noise from the skiing activities, however we feel they also must be considered in the MRC proposal.

As with all sewage treatment presently near or on the Gatineau River, outflow from a new sewage treatment plant will likely end up in the Gatineau River, and add to the increasing number of homes and other facilities that do likewise. The capacity of the river to absorb and carry sewage in the river without deleterious impacts on water quality is presently unknown and there is no centralized effort to track the number, volume and condition of the outflow of every permitted discharge into the river. At present, no-one knows with any precision how much sewage and septage is going into the Gatineau River and how much more it can take.

Because of this uncertainty, any facility that is to service the Mt. Cascades proposal must be built to the highest possible standards such as the system built by Chelsea at the Hudson Rd. waste water plant. If possible, it should also eliminate pharmaceuticals and other organic substances.

There will undoubtedly be a strong desire for those living in the proposed development to have an access to the river for boating and motorized recreation. We commend the MRC plan in that it does not allow a marina to be built at Mont Cascades. It is also encouraging to hear the developer indicate that no rental of personal watercraft will be allowed. However, if there is to be a boat ramp, it will bring boaters from not just the development, but from across the Gatineau Valley, including Hull and Ottawa, and result in increased river pollution (e.g., gas, oil, invasive species such as Zebra Mussels) and erosion of the river shoreline.

Any area with an increased concentration of roads and greatly reduced forest cover carries the risk of large quantities of runoff due to snow melt and heavy rains getting into the river. Consideration should be given to dealing with this using a retention basin(s), ponds and absorption by buffer zones.

The possibility of one or more ski runs being cleared on the west side of the mountain increases dramatically this risk of runoff into the river, and the additives used to help in snowmaking, if used, will have a negative impact on the

aquatic life of the river. Creating a wide, forested buffer zone between the housing and the ski hill, and the river would go a long way to alleviating these issues. This conservation zone would increase protection of the river and define the new community as an environmentally oriented, river respectful undertaking.

For the developer, Mr. Hunter, there is an opportunity here to create a community that will be a draw to those who take pride in living in an ecologically sound development that highlights and protects the beauty of its natural environment. It is up to the MRC to establish project criteria that will ensure that developments on its territory meet and exceed environmental standards and so ensure that the cherished Gatineau River will continue to be a gem that draws residents and tourists for generations to come.

Stephen Ferguson, Patrick Henry, Alain Piche, Ronnie Drever, and Paul Pestieau, on behalf of the Friends of the Gatineau River