

COMMUNIQUÉ



INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FIRST PART OF THE PUBLIC HEARING

Québec, April 2, 2007 – The commission of inquiry of the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement (BAPE), chaired by Mr. John Haemmerli, invites the public, groups, municipalities and organizations to participate in the first part of the public hearing on the *Lac Opasatica, Lac des Quinze, Forêt Piché-Lemoine and Réservoir Decelles Biodiversity Reserve projects in the natural province of the Abitibi and James Bay Lowlands*. These territories have been set aside and have been assigned a temporary protection status as proposed biodiversity reserves.

The sessions of the first part of this public hearing will begin on **Monday, April 16, 2007 at 7:30 p.m.** During this first part of the public hearing, the commission will hold sessions at the following locations:

Beginning on Monday, April 16, 2007
7:30 p.m.

Val-d'Or
Salle de l'âge d'or de Sainte-Lucie
165, rue Parent

Beginning on Wednesday, April 18, 2007
7:30 p.m.

Rouyn-Noranda
Club de l'âge d'or du cuivre de Rouyn -Noranda
215, avenue Dallaire

Beginning on Friday, April 20, 2007
7:30 p.m.

Angliers
Salle de l'Église
14, rue de la Baie-Miller

The sessions will continue the following days, in the afternoon and evening, depending on the needs of the public and the commission.

Erratum

Please note that the public notice published on March 30 in *Le Reflet* and on April 1 st in *Le Citoyen de Rouyn-Noranda, Le Citoyen d'Abitibi-Ouest, Le Citoyen de la Vallée de l'Or* et *Le Citoyen d'Harricana* announced that the sessions of the public hearing would start at 7:00 p.m. The correct time should have been **7 : 30 p.m .**

Web broadcast of the public hearing and asking of questions on line

The public sessions planned during the first part of the public hearing will be broadcast live in audio mode on the BAPE's web site at the following address: www.bape.gouv.qc.ca. This audio broadcast on the Internet will allow those who so wish to follow the unfolding of the public sessions.

Moreover, in order to enrich the public hearing dealing with the projects and to allow those persons who are unable to be present at the public sessions to participate in the examination of the projects, the commission invites those individuals who so wish to submit their questions by e-mail, from April 16 to 21, 2007 inclusively, by following the rules of operation stipulated on the BAPE's web site.

To avoid repetitive answers or if the number of written questions submitted is large, the commission may group, merge or summarize the questions before asking them to the resource persons or to the proponent during the sessions or address the questions to them, in writing, after the first part of the public hearing.

The commission cannot say at what precise moment the public's questions received by e-mail will be asked. You are invited to listen to the sessions live to find out the answers to these questions as well as to those of the commission transmitted during the public sessions.

A hearing in two parts

Obtaining information

The BAPE will hold a hearing in two parts, all of whose sessions will be open to the public. The first part of the hearing will allow the public and the commission to obtain information about the project and examine all its aspects. The Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs, which is submitting this project, will begin by making the presentation. Afterwards, it will be called upon, as will the resource persons invited by the commission, to answer the commission's and participants' questions.

Voicing opinions

During the second part of the hearing, planned in May 2007, the commission will obtain the public's opinion and suggestions. It will then hear any person, organization, group or municipality wishing to voice an opinion on the project, be it in the form of a brief or an oral presentation. Considered experts in matters pertaining to their community, their participation in the public hearing is essential.

Available documentation

All of the documents pertaining to this project are available for consultation at the following places:

- Municipal library of Rouyn-Noranda, 201, avenue Dallaire;
- Municipal library of Val-d'Or, 600, 7^e Rue;
- Municipal office of Angliers, 14, rue de la Baie-Miller;
- Municipal office of Rémigny, 1304, chemin de l'Église;
- Council of the Anishnabe Nation of Lac-Simon, 1026, boulevard Cicip, Lac-Simon;
- Anicinapek of Kitcisakik Band Council, C.P. 5206, Val-d'Or;
- Long Point First Nation, 112, Kakinwawigak mikana, Winneway;
- Timiskaming First Nation, 18, avenue Algonquin, Notre-Dame-du-Nord;
- Central Library of Université du Québec à Montréal, 1255, rue Saint-Denis;
- BAPE, Édifice Lomer-Gouin, 575, rue Saint-Amable, bureau 2.10, Québec.

The documentation may also be consulted at any time on the BAPE web site at the following address: www.bape.gouv.qc.ca under the heading "*Mandats en cours*".

To receive information

To be informed of the BAPE's activities in the specific case of the four biodiversity reserve projects in the natural province of the Abitibi and James Bay Lowlands, you can register by e-mail at the following address: 4reserves-abitibi-temiscamingue@bape.gouv.qc.ca. However, if you wish to receive information on each of the protected area projects for which the BAPE will hold a public consultation, you can register at the following address: aires-protegees@bape.gouv.qc.ca. In both cases, you can also register by calling 418 643-7447 or, toll-free, 1 800 463-4732.

For more information, you can get in touch with Anne-Lyne Boutin, commission secretariat coordinator, or with Rosemary Al-Hayek, communications advisor, by calling the aforementioned telephone number. You can also reach the commission by e-mail at: 4reserves-abitibi-temiscamingue@bape.gouv.qc.ca.

- 30 -

SOURCE: Rosemary Al-Hayek, communications advisor
418 643-7447, extension 425
Toll-free: 1 800 463-4732

Public consultation on the Lac Opasatica, Lac des Quinze, Forêt Piché-Lemoine and Réservoir Decelles Biodiversity Reserve projects in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region

Description of the projects

The aim of the projects presented by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs (MDDEP) is to create four biodiversity reserves in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region, namely those of Lac Opasatica, Lac des Quinze, Forêt Piché-Lemoine and Réservoir Decelles. The main conservation objectives sought by the Department are the protection of representative environments of the natural province of the Abitibi and James Bay Lowlands, the safeguarding of the biodiversity of ecosystems, as well as the acquisition of additional knowledge on the natural and cultural heritage.

The proposed Lac Opasatica Biodiversity Reserve runs partly alongside the border with Ontario . It is located approximately 25 kilometres south-west of Downtown Rouyn-Noranda. Its territory covers an area of 245 km² and includes, among other things, two old-growth forests having the status of exceptional forest ecosystem. In both cases, the forest is a balsam fir-white birch-Eastern white cedar forest . The sector targeted by the Department would also make it possible to protect eight sites of interest from a cultural or archaeological standpoint. Most of these sites are located on the shores of Lac Opasatica which has played an important role in aboriginal history.

The proposed Lac des Quinze Biodiversity Reserve is located about 35 km north-east of Ville-Marie and covers an approximate area of 159 km². This territory is home to a few mature stands of tolerant hardwoods, in particular sugar maple-yellow birch stands. Such stands are rare in this natural province . In addition, the territory has a very great archaeological potential related to the aboriginal occupation.

The proposed Forêt Piché-Lemoine Biodiversity Reserve is located less than ten kilometres south-west of Downtown Val-d'Or and covers an area of close to 95 km². The protection of this territory would make it possible to preserve old-growth stands of yellow birch at the northern limit of their distribution area. This peri-urban forest is of great social interest owing to its recreational vocation.

The proposed Réservoir Decelles Biodiversity Reserve is located approximately 25 kilometres south-west of Val-d'Or and covers an approximate area of 81 km². This territory comprises the domains of the balsam fir-yellow birch forest and balsam fir-white birch forest. The conservation of this territory would consolidate the protection of the dunes of the Harricana moraine.

Under the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*, the main activities prohibited on these territories are forest management, mining and the development of hydraulic resources. Existing uses and rights such as hunting, fishing, vacationing and aboriginal traditional activities are maintained.

The MDDEP would like stakeholders from the community to participate in the conservation and development activities associated with these territories. Moreover, local stakeholders could contribute to the planning of these activities, which will have to be compatible with the biodiversity objectives identified in the conservation plans and comply with the regulations in effect.