



President's Report

Francis LeBlanc

Following our 2022 AGM, the Association undertook to rebuild our website, under the leadership of Board Member Nicholas McConnery. Nicholas assembled the statement of work, oversaw the search for suitable bidders, and directed the early design process with **Inter-vision** (www.inter-vision.ca), the firm that we chose to do the project. As the person with the longest history with the Association, it fell to me to contribute much of the content and organization for the new site. The process of rebuilding the site turned out to be much more difficult and time consuming than either of us expected and I am deeply grateful to Nicholas for his hard work and patience throughout this whole exercise.

The new website was officially launched by a new version of our electronic bulletin, **Shorelines**, on July 24th. While there remain bugs and fixes to be worked out, the new site has new functionalities and takes advantage of recent developments in web design. You will now be able to access the site readily from all your devices. For example, you can view the documents for this AGM from your smartphone. The new site is built on a WordPress platform and our bulletin now uses Mailchimp. We are anxious to find a volunteer who can serve as an in-house webmaster and helping to keep our new site fresh and up to date.

While communication with Association members during this period has been somewhat limited, it does not mean that the Association has not been active. Water quality testing on various lakes under the RSVL program has continued under the able direction of Don Karn. The team led by Dick Ryan continues to launch and reposition ever more milfoil demarcation buoys to warn boaters of milfoil beds throughout Blue Sea and other lakes. It is an innovative program that I now see being adopted in other watersheds and suggests that we have lessons we might share to expand the scale of this program across Quebec.

We are in active discussion with the Association for Lakes Edja, Caya, and Roberge (ALECR) regarding the granting of affiliate status for ALECR under the provisions of our Association's General Rules.

During the weekend of July 14-16, a team from ABV des 7, supported by volunteers from the Association, carried out the fourth assessment of our 2020 jute project to combat Eurasian

Milfoil. The team examined the state of decomposition of the jute tarps and will report on the project to the Quebec government. A fifth and final assessment is planned for 2025.

With the website project behind us, the Association is now in a better position to focus on its next big initiative, an updated analysis of water quality and environmental health of the watershed with the aim of establishing priorities for protecting the health of the watershed in the future. We are grateful that both of our Municipal Partners have approved our request for seed money to carry out this endeavour and we expect to work in close cooperation with them as we move forward.

The year has also seen the Association reach out and establish links with other like-minded organizations to stay abreast of the latest thinking on watershed issues. In the spring we became members of **RAPPEL** (www.rappel.qc.ca), the Social Enterprise Coop in the Eastern Townships that is doing leading edge work on watershed issues. In June, we joined the **Fédération québécoise de défense des lacs et cours d'eau** (www.fqdlc.org) an advocacy group representing organizations across Quebec that is working to persuade governments to step their commitment to the protection of our water resources. The Association is also member of the **Regroupement pour la protection de l'eau de la Vallée-de-la-Gatineau (RPEVG)**, which mobilises municipalities, lac Associations, businesses, and interested individuals on water protection issues. I currently lead the RPEVG.

In June, I attended a two-day conference at Mont Tremblant called the **Forum National sur les Lacs**, organized by the **CRE Laurentides**. The Conference was well-organized, highly informative, and engaging. We heard from government officials, academics and researchers working in the field, and practical exercises on means to protect our waterways. It is astounding how much is going on in this area!

My main takeaway from this Conference was that the biggest danger to the waterways in Quebec are from invasive species and, with climate change, there are many new threats at our doorstep. When it comes to responding to this threat, prevention is far more effective – and cost effective - than dealing with the threat once it has arrived. This reinforces the need to expand support for mandatory boat washing. When it comes to effectively controlling or eradicating invasive species such as Eurasian milfoil, the lesson from recent case studies is that this requires considerable investment, sustained over a long period of time.

Finally, I want to thank all members of the Association for your words of support, your financial contributions, and your volunteer efforts. As much as the cause is important, it is the friendships and human connections that continue to make this work interesting. But I need more of you to get involved. What I have discovered is that there many knowledgeable, skillful, committed, and well-connected people living around the Blue Sea Watershed. The challenges we face to keep our watershed healthy are significant and will only increase in the future. Many more hands will make for lighter work.