

Report
on the consultation
with
Châteauguay citizens
on whether to
develop and / or preserve
the South-West zone

Presented to the council on Monday, September 14, 2009

by

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SUMMARY OF THE MANDATE

Following various studies that were carried out on this area, commonly known as the South-West sector, the members of the municipal council instructed the director of economic development to inform the citizens of Châteauguay of various possible scenarios for the future of this sector, one of the last major areas for development in the city. And, secondly, to find out from citizens which direction they preferred that their council take on this subject.

Submissions were received and the council mandated us to report on the responses received from the citizens.

The role of members of this committee is to summarize the views of the citizens of Châteauguay who submitted their written opinions on the subject before the August 14 deadline and not to make a qualitative analysis of the submissions neither to make recommendations of their own.

Summary of the Procedure Followed

Five different information meetings were organized during which three development/conservation scenarios were presented to the citizens.

These three scenarios were summarized in a brochure that was distributed by mail to all the residences of Châteauguay.

These three scenarios represent three levels of development for the sector:

Scenario 'A' A scenario with conventional development.

Scenario 'B' A scenario based on a balance between conservation and development.

Scenario 'C' A scenario based mainly on the conservation with a minimum of development.

For each of these scenarios, the advantages and disadvantages in terms of environmental, social and financial impacts were presented.

Following these information evenings and the distribution by mail of the brochure summarizing the various scenarios, the citizens were invited to submit their opinions concerning the three scenarios or any other scenario that they could propose to the municipality, with scenarios A, B and C being examples of some possibilities.

As mentioned by the Mayor during the information meeting, citizens could indicate their preference by:

- a) Simply mentioning their preference for one of the three scenarios presented or any other scenario, or
- b) By presenting a written opinion.

These preferences or opinions were to:

- have been received by the municipality before Friday, August 14,
- include the name of the person as well as their address in order to insure that only citizens of Châteauguay were included,
- be in writing, either by mail or by e-mail.

Methodology

- Ensuring that all of the residents of Châteauguay over the age of 18 had the right to present their opinion,
- The views of individuals who are 18 years and over were considered, even if they had the same address as someone else. In other words, three people from same family = three opinions;
- Children and adolescents were not included if they were not 18 or if an age was not indicated
- When the person did not write their name (either on a paper submission or on an email), the submission was rejected;
- If the person chose the "Family" option, but the name of husband or wife was not specified, we counted one person;
- Individuals who do not live in Châteauguay were excluded ;
- People who did not provide their address and who could not be contacted were excluded.

Summary of the Submissions Received

Not counting the letters and written submissions that were rejected for the reasons previously explained, here is the count of citizens who submitted their opinion to the municipality by:

- E-mail: 351 individuals
- Mail: 75 individuals
- Petition: 158 individuals

584 citizens, residents of Châteauguay and who are 18 years of age and over, made their opinions known to the municipal council.

These citizens opted for one of the three scenarios presented or for a scenario that did not permit any residential development in the area under study or advised that they were in favour of conservation without mentioning any one of the scenarios in particular. The scenario developed and called scenario 'D' by Héritage St-Bernard was chosen by many individuals

In fact, it was very difficult to unravel the people who supported scenario 'C' from those who supported scenario 'D':

- Some people thought that they could only vote for one of the three proposed scenarios,
- Some individuals who voted for the 'C' scenario mentioned that they did not want any residential development in the sector,
- Some people who gave their opinion before scenario 'D' was made an option but whose tone of opinion could leave little doubt that they favoured a situation such as scenario 'D' without it being called by that name.

In practice we should not take the 'C' and 'D' literally. As this survey is not a referendum but a sounding of general opinion to guide the new council in its planning for the future of this sector, we believe that this is not very important.

It should also be noted that some individuals voiced a second opinion that they would accept.

A summary of the submissions received, giving you a general idea of the opinions expressed, is attached.

Copies of the submissions that were received are also attached to this report.

Count of Submissions Received:

First choice:

Scenario A:	6	1.03%
Scenario B:	39	6.68%
Scenario C:	166 + 116 = 282	28.42% + 19.86% = 48.29%
Scenario D:	215 + 42 = 257	36.82% + 7.19% = 44.01%
Total:	584 individuals	100%

Second choice:

Scenario C acceptable if D is not selected:	13
Scenario B acceptable if C is not selected:	13

For your information, if you count the number of submissions (without the petitions) **by electoral district**, we have the following results:

In district # 1: 74
In district # 2: 31
In district # 3: 45
In district # 4: 31
In district # 5: 39
In district # 6: 41
In district # 7: 95
In district # 8: 70

Total: 426 individuals

It should be noted that three detailed submissions or opinions were presented and copies are also included in the annex:

- Mr Claude Perron and Mrs Céline Dumas
- Le Club des ornithologues de Châteauguay
and
- Héritage St-Bernard that, as usual, produced a very comprehensive document that must be considered as a reference work in this dossier.

Submissions Collected

The main principles, facts and commentaries that were found in the opinions that were provided by the citizens are as followed and are listed below without an order of priority:

- The Châteauguay-Léry woodland is one of the last great forests of the Montreal metropolitan area and has been recognized as such by the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM).
- The Châteauguay-Léry woodland is home to exceptional flora and fauna.
- This forest deserves to be protected for our children and grandchildren.
- The forest has a very important positive effect on our health and the climate.
- Many residents moved to Châteauguay in order to take advantage of the woodlands and nature that are found here.
- Many individuals mentioned that residential development must be concentrated in other sectors of the municipality.
- Many individuals mentioned that they would agree to have their taxes increase in order to preserve this woodland.
- To improve the finances of the municipality, efforts should be made to develop the industrial park.
- Since the entire population profits from the benefits of this woodland, financing should be supplied not only by the citizens of Châteauguay, but by the regional, provincial as well as federal authorities.
- Discussions should be undertaken immediately with the municipality of Léry in order to ensure that conservation efforts on the section of the woodland located inside the limits of Châteauguay are in conjunction with the efforts in the section located in Léry.
- The private property owners must receive fair compensation for their land and preliminary discussions must be undertaken immediately with them to find out their intentions.
- An overall conservation and development plan must be prepared as quickly as possible in order to establish the vocation of the woodland, the financial resources required as well as a schedule.
- It should be noted that the presentation made by a representative of Nature-Action Québec has raised high hopes among many citizens about the financing of this conservation operation.
- Many individuals noted that we should no longer look to development at any price but to develop according to the principles of sustainable development.

Conclusion

The people who voted have, undoubtedly, called for a 'conservation' approach.

They rejected the sacrifice of a part of the woodland for residential development regardless of the short term effect on the municipal budget.

They have distanced themselves from development at any cost to seek sustainable development.

We recommend to the council that a copy of all of the submissions received as well as summary of them be available for consultation at the library while protecting any personal information included therein.