



A5X  
C.P. 97  
Wakefield, QC J0X 3G0

February 20, 2012

To: Premier Charest,

**RE: Highway A5 expansion: Request for IMMEDIATE MORATORIUM on clearing and cutting of trees in preparation for the extension of the highway into the Wakefield/La Pêche area.**

Dear Premier

We are writing to request that the government of Québec issue an immediate MORATORIUM on cutting and clearing of the proposed La Pêche section of the Autoroute 5 extension north of Farm Point. This would allow the time necessary to address and respond to the many concerns that your office and other authorities have received from local citizens and citizen groups of the area over the last few years. Once the trees are cleared, our issues and concerns will be moot – and you will no longer have the opportunity to create an example in this beautiful region of Outaouais of what GOOD PROGRESS can look like.

We believe that our request does not hinder nor drastically slow-down the construction of the highway A5 expansion since the current construction around Chelsea, Farm Point, will continue into 2013, and there is no need to start clearing north of the current construction site at this time.

A large and growing number of local citizens have been trying for well over two years to discuss environmental and economic concerns raised by the extension with the Ministry of Transportation (MTQ) based on the fact that its original design and its environmental assessments are now over 25 years old and no longer meet the current standards of the provincial or federal governments. The current highway design, with its over-scaled interchange and roadways, will have a negative economic impact on tourism and outdoor recreational activities in the area, and will profoundly damage the aesthetic and ecological integrity of the surrounding area. It will also sever the Gatineau Park from the Gatineau River forever while violating the boundaries of the Park.

We have attempted to open a discussion with the Ministry but to no avail. We have tried to secure assurances that critical animal habitat, and the aquifer that provides well-water for the residents of Vallée Verdé, will be protected. None of these concerns have been adequately addressed by any branch of government.

We believe that the A5 design consists of a design that is hideously inappropriate for the region, which entails unnecessary blasting of a mountain, and irreparable damage to a key wetland. This design does not conform to principles of sustainability contained in the Québec sustainable development act. More than any of these, the entire process has not entailed anything approaching adequate public consultation. We are moving out of the era in which major infrastructure and development projects can be undertaken without consideration for the environment, or the health and well-being of local communities. The current government of Québec has openly committed itself to a better environmental future and more democratic

transparency. Speaking to the people of La Pêche and openly exploring our concerns would prove conclusively that the government means what it says.

We demand, therefore, that there be no more preparatory clearing of trees until these issues are resolved. In other words, we demand a MORATORIUM on preparatory work including clearing and tree cutting in the proposed La Pêche section of the A5 extension for one year in order to address the concerns and requests of the citizens, including:

1. That a new PUBLIC CONSULTATION be called to address the concerns of the current community, such as negative impact on tourism, the size of the proposed interchange, the wide, unnecessary cutting through the Gatineau Park, the water issues, etc;
2. That a "COMPREHENSIVE STUDY LEVEL ASSESSMENT" of the environmental impacts of the proposed A5 extension be made;
3. That the unresolved VALLÉE VERDE AQUIFER issues identified in the CPAWS response to the Environmental Screening 2010 be addressed, such as the Wakefield Spring and that local resident's well water needs are met before any construction begins;
4. That the A5 "limite d'emprise" goes through a sensitive area of the GATINEAU PARK and there are unresolved issues regarding Transport Canada or MTQ addressing the concerns in the Master Plan of the Gatineau Park and the Gatineau Park Ecosystem Conservation Plan; and
5. That Transport Canada or MTQ offer a NEW HIGHWAY DESIGN that causes less negative impact to the surrounding area.

We ask that you respond to this request in a very timely manner considering that the cutting could commence as early as today. We will be following up daily with the expectation of immediate action on this file.

Respectfully yours,

#### References:

- Letter from EcoJustice, by William Amos on behalf of Peter Andrée, dated January 4, 2011
- Comments by CPAWS (Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – Ottawa Valley Chapter, January 10, 2011 on Final Screening Report Prepared by Transport Canada, December, 2010
- Prolongement de L'Autoroute 5 entre Farm Pointe et le Raccordement a la Route 366. Rapport D'Examen Préalable Version Finale, (Final Screening Report) prepared by Transport Canada December, 2010.
- Vallee Verde Landowners' Response of January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012, regarding Well replacement construction in advance of the construction of the Highway A5, Lapêche Sector.

Cc: