

**Brief to the Commission of the Bureau
d'audiences publique sur l'environnement.**

concerning

the proposed megadump at Danford Lake

**submitted by John Edwards
A resident on highway 105 for 38 years**

June 2007

As might be expected given the location of my residence and as outlined in my letter requesting public hearings, my primary interest is the impact of the proposed megadump on Highway 105.

The presentation addresses two issues:

- The general question of how close can and should garbage disposal sites be to the main sources of garbage; and then,
- Some characteristics of Highway 105 – history, traffic levels and accidents

Proximity of garbage disposal sites to the main sources of garbage

Most people would likely agree with the proposition that the distance garbage is transported should be minimized as much as possible for all kinds of reasons (including the motivationally-sound principle that cities should clean up their own mess).

Teknika-LDC seem to believe it, at least to some extent, when

- they argue in their impact study that the megadump should be within 100 kilometers of the City of Gatineau
- Mr Rouleau in his attempt in June 2005 to persuade that city of the value of his proposal wrote that, with Danford being 40 kilometers closer than Lachute, there would be a reduction in CO2 emissions of 100,000 kilograms a year if it were to transport its garbage the 85 or so kilometers to Danford rather than the 125 kilometers to Lachute, adding that this was “*not negligible in the context of the commitments made by Canada in regard to the Kyoto Protocol*”. (1)
- Dr Andre Poulin in the first phase of BAPE suggested that negotiations were already advanced between the City of Gatineau and Trois Rivieres on the possible trucking of Gatineau garbage to the dump at St Etienne des Gres. He stated that he did not think that this would respect the concept of sustainable development.

So how did Teknika-LDC defend the Danford site from precisely the same type of criticism – of not having found a site much closer to Gatineau? They simply asserted that “*the presence of Gatineau Park, numerous lakes and important rivers with major watersheds*” justified ruling out the geographic area of the MRC Vallee de la Gatineau and the MRC Collines de l’Outaouais (2). These two MRCs just happen to encompass the entire stretch of Highway 105 from the City of Gatineau to the Kazabazua turn-off to Danford Lake.

Moreover many would also question whether the area of Alleyn and Cawood has fewer lakes than many parts of these two MRCs. Many would also point out that the drainage from Alleyn and Cawood is into rivers and streams that flow eventually into the same Kazabazua-Gatineau river system.

The possibility that huge quantities of garbage would be transported along an 85 kilometer, largely two-lane route for the next 30 years is for many of us very disturbing. And this concern is by no means limited to those who live on or near Highway 105. It is shared certainly by some Quebec government officials. Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, an official with Environment Quebec, captured the concern so well in his reaction to the impact study:

“...this waste management proposal is based on assumptions that seriously undermine the values associated with sustainable development...A proposal that involves the movement of thousands of heavy vehicles over the coming decades with the consequential demands for fossil fuels and all that implies; air emissions, greenhouse gases, as well as the noise impacts on those who live along the proposed route does nothing to convince us that it will result in a more efficient use of our resources nor an improvement in the quality of life of the residents directly affected by it...”⁽³⁾

Because of the dangers in public policy of drawing conclusions about a specific case without looking at the broader picture, I decided to conduct a rather rudimentary survey by e-mail and telephone. Given that the City of Gatineau has about 250,000 residents, I contacted the 13 Canadian cities with a population between 150,000 and 350,000 and asked them how many kilometers from the city was their primary garbage disposal site. In cases where the site was within city limits, I asked them to estimate the distance from downtown to the site. I think you will find the results interesting.

Going from west to east across Canada:

Victoria: 11 kilometers from the city to the landfill
Burnaby : The incinerator which handles 90% of its non-recyclable waste is within the municipality, about 10 kilometers from city centre. It may be worth recalling from earlier testimony that had the Quebec Government not put a moratorium on incineration, Gatineau would likely now be burning their waste.
Saskatoon: 7 kilometers

Regina: 10 kilometers

Sudbury: 5 kilometers

Windsor: 35 kilometers

Markham&Oshawa: These two cities have been exporting their garbage through their regions, Durham and York, over two hundred kilometers to the United States but now must find an alternative by 2010. Despite the similar tough deadlines, they are tackling the challenge in a manner very differently from the course followed at Danford.

- The two regions decided to work together on a joint solution.
- Following public consultations at which 80% of participants favoured thermal solutions, they decided to select that kind of technology and not consider landfill as an option.
- They then established site criteria, identified a sizeable list of possible sites and, after more investigation, reduced this list to five, all on land zoned industrial .
- They have completed over 50 public consultation sessions.
- A request for possible vendors will be issued shortly, followed by a request for proposals and then the preferred site and vendor will be selected in 2008.

It has been a transparent process with an informative website telling everyone what was happening. I don't want to leave the impression that all those near the proposed sites are cheering; there are concerns about transportation and public health which are being addressed, in part by another round of consultations very soon.

All five sites are within 30 kilometers of both cities.

Gatineau: despite the pressures from the developer and the MRC Pontiac, this city has held a steady course, seeking a short term solution to give them time to find a better long term solution, probably of a waste-to-energy type.

Laval: 15 kilometers

Sherbrooke: within the municipality, about 4 kilometers from downtown. There were references during Phase 1 to an unsuccessful class action lawsuit by nearby residents.

Halifax: 11 kilometers from downtown

St Johns: 17 kilometers

To summarize, of the 13 Canadian cities, 10 have firm arrangements and, of these, nine have disposal sites within 17 kilometers – less than the distance from Gatineau to Lapeche. Two others are in transition to new technologies

sited quite close to them. The thirteenth is Gatineau which appears to be following the Oshawa-Markham path, albeit at a slower pace. These 13 cities are located in a wide variety of geography.

Given that they have found – or are finding – nearby garbage disposal locations, it would seem fair to ask how seriously the Danford proposal with its long distance trucking should be taken.

I would now like to address some special characteristics of Highway 105.

Commissioners, as you will have seen, small towns are dotted along the highway, originating from the establishment of rest stops for those traveling in horse-drawn vehicles, hence the fact so many are about 8 kilometers apart – Wakefield to Alcove, to Farrelton, to Brennan's Hill and Low, to Venosta, to Kazabazua, to Gracefield and on to Bouchette and Maniwaki. The highway runs right through the heart of most of these towns and it will be decades before they are bypassed by the extension of Highway 5. With growing numbers of trucks, more and more commuters to Gatineau and Ottawa, more cottagers and tourists, the traffic at some times of the day can be heavy and usually moving fast. Sadly only a proportion of drivers observe speed limits on the open road or the lower limits in the small towns.

Portions of the road also reflect its origins by following closely the shoreline of the Gatineau River with consequential winding and sharp turns.

For these reasons alone, a substantial increase in truck traffic would not be welcome. How much of an increase would result from the megadump remains unclear.

Teknika-LDC argue that for Highway 105 up to Kazabazua, it would be less than a 10% increase, just 58 more truck trips a day. What may not be readily understood is that, in the Teknika-LDC report, 80% of the additional trucks would be 27 tonners, a major increase in giant trucks. Based on my observation of traffic on the 105, I suspect that this increase could be equivalent to a doubling of the present number of lumber trucks.

However, the estimates of Teknika-LDC may be very wrong. The conclusion of a study made by my friend, Ed Masotti, suggests that, while the increase in 27 tonners would seem about right, the increase in 7 tonners should be more than ten times higher (131 instead of 12).

Regardless of which set of estimates one chooses, there can be no doubt that there would be a significant increase in heavy vehicles on a road along which there are many accidents. Those of us who were in the area some decades ago can remember the carnage of those times, when the highway was nicknamed Sang Cinq. Improvements to the highway in recent years have removed some of the more dangerous spots but the rising traffic levels seem to have more than offset their impact.

Certainly, this is the perception.

In November 2006, LaPêche Mayor Robert Bussière was quoted in a newspaper as saying there have been too many lives lost on the narrow crooked highway because it had become very dangerous over the past 10 years. *“Highway 105 is blocking the growth of LaPêche and communities to the north because it is a dangerous highway”* (4).

Information received from the Outaouais Division of the Ministry of Transport as a result of a question posed in the first part of the BAPE process, provides clear evidence that the perception is reality - that 105 is becoming steadily more dangerous.

The total number of accidents on Highway 105 from the end of Autoroute 5 to the Kazabazua turn-off averaged 137 a year between 1995 and 2000. It has been rising since and in 2006 the total of 197 was 44% above the average in the late 90s.

Another perspective may be added. The Government of Quebec in its transportation policy 2001-2005 sought to achieve a 15% reduction in the province-wide number of traffic deaths and serious harm over those five years. While the objective was not reached, there was a 7% reduction across Quebec. However such a reduction was not experienced in our area. For the parts of highway 105 to the 301 turn-off and highway 301 to the juncture with 303, the change was not a decrease but an increase. Because the numbers are very small, the Ministry of transport advises caution in using these figures of death and serious harm.

At the very least, we can say that no improvement has occurred on Highway 105 in the number of most serious accidents while the total number of

accidents of all kinds continues to rise unabated by whatever improvements are being made to the roads.

It is against this background that we must confront the probable impact of the increases in truck traffic that would result from the Danford Lake dump. I don't think that anyone would argue that the increases can do other than increase the number of accidents. In early 2006, Jacques Viger, Regional Director General (Health & Social services), responsible for Outaouais responded to the impact study in part as follows:

“... according to us the worst part of the route is ...between Wakefield and Brennan's Hill, because there Highway 105 is very winding and narrow... Can one try to evaluate the increase in accident risk...that would result from the dump, taking account of the 27 ton trucks?”⁽⁵⁾

No reply seems to have been made by Teknika-LDC. Yet it is an important question since apparently 17% of all traffic deaths in Canada have involved trucks over 4.5 tons. It is perhaps not so surprising in that transport trucks take on average 40% more distance to stop ⁽⁶⁾.

We do not believe that a project that would lead to a significant augmentation of trucks should be authorized until some success has been achieved in reducing the accident rate. In his response to a question earlier in these proceedings, Jean-Louis Poissant, an official with the Ministry of Health & Social Services said it would be better if the site were on the south side of Wakefield and, given the number of trucks already using 105, he worried about the impact of more.

CONCLUSIONS

I am totally opposed to the project going ahead as presently planned.

It is not difficult to suggest better alternatives. For instance:

- If there is to be one garbage disposal site to serve the whole of the Outaouais, it should be located much closer to the City of Gatineau which generates more than 70% of the waste. This would dramatically decrease transportation. To reduce public opposition to a dump site of hundreds of acres (or concern over the loss of agricultural land), technologies with, among other virtues, a much smaller footprint such as incineration or gasification should be used. (A recent US study noted that *“emissions from diesel trucks are far greater than the trace emissions from controlled WTE (waste-to-energy) plants”*⁽⁷⁾).

- Better still might be two waste-to-energy projects – one close to the City of Gatineau and another smaller one perhaps near Danford or Kazabazua - further decreasing transportation.

Until such alternatives would be available, most garbage would have to go to Lachute – where most is already going. – or the Quebec government could extend its January 2009 deadline for closing existing trench landfills.

Based on my discussions with City of Gatineau officials and on the testimony of Jacques Nadeau, the City’s representative during Phase 1, I believe that these conclusions are consistent with their present thinking – a critical factor given the City’s dominant stature in the Outaouais.

I have one further comment before I complete my brief, Commissioners. Like many observers, I am convinced that, after so many years of uncertainty, rhetoric and little change, a major shift in public policy has been occurring over the past six months to a year towards action to clean up our environmental behaviours. This momentum will accelerate. I do in all sincerity believe that the practice of dumping huge volumes of waste is already dying away due to public opposition, due to progress in adopting the values reflected in the Reduce-Reuse-Recycle mantra and due to the growing popularity of technologies to manage residual waste that are less damaging to our quality of life.

Thank you.

(1) LDC memoire June 6, 2005

(2) LDC impact study p 32

(3) Memoire Jean-Pierre Lefebvre to Michel Goulet April 12, 2006

(4) Citizen November 16, 2006

(5) Memoire Jacques Viger to Nicolas Juneau March 31, 2006

(6) Website of Canadians for Responsible & Safe Highways

(7) “Comparative impacts of local Waste TO Energy versus Long Distance Disposal of Municipal Waste” Jack Lauder et al.