

The Colibris wharf situation: the town and its councillors cave!

2015/06/17 by R.L.B.



After five and a half years of interminable procedures, after tens of thousands of dollars spent on legal fees, after many bitter debates and numerous postponements, Ville de Lac-Brome has just laconically and dryly announced that an out-of-court settlement has been reached about the quais Colibris dossier.

Absolutely flummoxed by the term, "out-of-court" settlement, one must remember that the town has totally abandoned its previously affirmed position statements, now totally tossed aside. What has it gained in all of this? Nothing. This is a total loss and there is no explanation for the entire unravelling of a case that was important for the environmentally friendly and environmentally responsible spirit of community action as we know it. The negotiation was a one-way street, without any benefit or explanation to our community, which deserved better. The usual descriptive "fudge the issue" terms were employed: "the Council feels that it is in the ultimate interests of the town to accept this out-of-court settlement. The unanimous vote of council has sealed the deal in perfect harmony for our political leaders, putting closure to a debate that has now left many unanswered questions about the future role and vision of members of council in the democratic process.

Did we really have to endure this saga in which so many public spirited citizens enthusiastically took part, to witness such a pathetic result at the end? No, for sure. And we can ask just how, over these years, was the file managed by the town council and municipal officers?

As far back as 2009, Renaissance Brome Lake (RBL) had expressed its concerns about the issue of the multiplication of piers and wharves in the fragile wetlands of the baie des Colibris and asked that the basic environmental protection in force be adhered to. It was at the time considered the responsibility of the town, the proprietors and the promoter to come up with solutions that would be in everyone's best interests, especially nature's. Unfortunately, because of a lack of vision and political will, these solutions never saw the light of day. As the acknowledged watchdog for the health of the lake, RBL was kept out of any discussions and emerging debates that might have taken place. As recognized as town partners related to "lake" matters, we would have expected more. Despite this situation, RBL conducted numerous research projects and biodiversity inventory projects to reveal the substantial ecological value of this sector and, demonstrating along the way, why it must be better protected.

To sum up, and painfully so, we have now witnessed the legalization of the presence of boats in a recognized ecologically fragile zone. It is a truly demotivating situation in that an entire

community which has come to realize the precious jewel we have in Brome Lake, is never perpetually safe from the self interest players whatever side they sit on.

We must turn the page for now but let's hope for a better resolution to future files.