

Water management in West Bolton: The facts

Recently, two articles in local papers have addressed environmental quality in West Bolton. One concerned storm water runoff from West Bolton to Brome Lake, and the second involved gravel pits. Both articles seemed to suggest that the municipality has made little effort in these areas. In fact, this is far from the case.

In December 2012, the MRC Brome-Missisquoi adopted an action plan on the integrated and sustainable use of water, which recommended the installation of sedimentation traps and retention basins in connection with road infrastructure. By the fall of 2013, the Municipality of West Bolton was the **only** municipality within our MRC to file a report on the actions it had taken in this regard. In fact, in a letter to the municipality dated February 10, 2014, Mr. Pierre Beaudoin, Secretary of Renaissance Lac Brome, commended West Bolton's approach to erosion control, stating: These are very concrete and important initiatives for water quality. We would like to thank the Council and the municipal administration for these projects.

His comments were with reference to our initiatives on Paramount Road, but the municipality did not stop there. A few months later, Mountain Road underwent similar improvements. In parallel, West Bolton took steps to measure the impact of its initiatives by mandating the OBV Yamaska to sample and assess the quality of our major streams. Here again, the municipality has reason to be proud of the fact that, in terms of the state of our knowledge on the condition of our water, we are among the most advanced in the region.

Moreover, because we are convinced that sporadic interventions are not sufficient to ensure a healthy environment, the municipality incorporates environmental considerations into all its activities. No application that has the potential to impact streams or groundwater can be recommended by the Urbanism Committee until it is accompanied by an impact study produced by an independent engineering firm. In fact, the municipality recently forwarded one such study to Town of Brome Lake, because it concerned their water quality as well. No drainage scheme can proceed without an assessment by the MRC and the implementation of any measures they advise. No sand or gravel pits can operate without regular municipal inspections and follow-up with the appropriate ministries -- even though municipalities ultimately have very limited powers in this area.

In fact, even though the municipality continues to revise its bylaws in order to be more proactive on the environmental front -- because obviously it is always possible to do more -- some of our wishes lie beyond our territorial or our legal jurisdiction. This is why the municipality of West Bolton seeks and encourages collaboration with stakeholders at every level. Such was our approach regarding the Mont Gauvin project in St- Étienne-de-Bolton: following a meeting that took place at our request, our neighbours agreed to implement certain mitigation measures. So although the municipality of West Bolton welcomes critique and social debate, we would like to emphasize that collaboration and teamwork will always be more effective than criticism. Our approach to the environment must be comprehensive and inclusive. We have to work to bring stakeholders together, not divide them. Collaboration and goodwill will always go further than isolated efforts and reprimands.