

GATINEAU'S ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

November 18, 2008




Ville de
Gatineau

**A GREENER
CITY IN
THE PALM
OF YOUR HAND!**



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*“We tend to think of the ecosystem as nothing but the forests,
oceans, lakes and other so-called natural areas,
but cities are also ecosystems.”*

(translation)

Hubert Reeves, Quebec Astrophysicist

FOREWORD

An environmental policy in Gatineau – why? who for?

Gatineau – a green city, a blend of urban and natural areas, with abundant and accessible trees, waterways, wildlife and vegetation. And next to this, all the amenities of modern life. Why would we need an environmental policy when we get to reside, live and work in such a place? First, to preserve it. Second, to improve it. At least this was the spirit and intent of Gatineau at the time when this first Environmental Policy was developed.

Gatineau’s Environmental Policy is an initiative by the Municipal Council, under the guidance of the Commission consultative sur l’environnement et le développement durable. It comes together through the management of Gatineau as an ecosystem, and stems from its Strategic Plan, as do its policies on culture, the family, sports, recreation and the outdoors, and housing, all of which are already in place and being implemented.

The Environmental Policy is the outcome of extensive research, thinking and consultations, involving hundreds of residents, organizations and professionals. The needs and points of view expressed by the public during the different consultation stages have been heard. Expectations are very high, and through this policy, Gatineau makes its commitment to better integrate the environmental aspects into the decision-making and communications processes under its different activities.

In presenting the main orientations and objectives that it has set out, Gatineau’s Environmental Policy clearly outlines the commitment by the Municipal Council and all of the municipal departments to protect the environment and the population’s well-being. But wherever there is commitment there must also be participation. Gatineau cannot do it alone. It relies on everybody’s cooperation: the public, organizations, institutions and private and public-sector businesses throughout its territory. The surrounding cities and other levels of government are also key players in their individual jurisdictions. These groups are all partners.

Gatineau, like its partners, is already aware of the importance that even the slightest gesture can have in improving the immediate environment and the larger ecosystem. The Environmental Policy will be part of this global movement, which is already well under way, and its intent is to bring to it leadership and consistency.



A message from the Mayor

I am particularly proud to present to you Gatineau's Environmental Policy. I hope that it will fulfill its role, which is to place the focus squarely on the environment in our day-to-day activities.

Through its Environmental Policy, Gatineau commits to taking determined action to support the “green” values and priorities of Gatineau residents. This policy targets seven areas: water, air, soil, energy, quality of life, biodiversity and residual materials; and proposes four main orientations: showing leadership, acting with a focus on sustainable development, increasing awareness and educating to stimulate change and commitment, and monitoring, enforcing and strengthening by-laws. It is an invitation to all residents to become partners in action and to team up with the municipal administration to preserve the quality of Gatineau's environment.

The Environmental Policy is the product of an intensive consultation process with residents and partners who are concerned about the environment. I thank all participants, and especially the members of the Commission consultative sur l'environnement et le développement durable, who orchestrated it so efficiently.

If we all—elected officials, municipal employees, residents, businesses—work on it, a “greener city will be in the palm of our hand.” I invite you to discover this new policy and to learn more about its main orientations, themes and objectives, and make them yours. We are ready to get to work, and we need each and every one of you for this.

Marc Bureau
Mayor of Gatineau

A message from the Chair of the Commission consultative sur l'environnement et le développement durable

Go and learn from nature. Nothing could be truer in the life of a municipality than these words by Leonardo da Vinci. In fact, can any human activity—work, recreation, personal life, industrial or commercial—ever escape the question of its impact on its environment and the need to think about nature before doing anything? We really must take the environment into consideration—with a focus on sustainable development—before, during and after every activity.

Throughout the process that led to the publication of this Policy, the Commission consultative sur l'environnement et le développement durable enjoyed a great deal of public support as it pursued its public consultation mandate. Young and old, individuals, groups and businesses were all invited to take part, and many responded and shared their expectations about the commitments that Gatineau should make to environmental issues.

Gatineau's new Environmental Policy stems from the determination of its residents and local partners to assume their responsibilities as individuals or businesses belonging to the community. Thus, it is with the certainty of having our partners' backing—that they are with us in this—that we will be able to start implementing this Policy and integrating it into our decisions and day-to-day quest for new environmental habits.

Patrice Martin
Chair of the Commission consultative sur l'environnement et le développement durable



INTRODUCTION

“A greener city in the palm of your hand!” This slogan clearly expresses one of the key elements of the quality of life in Gatineau. Here, there is no need to choose between the city and nature: both are in the palm of our hand. It also summarizes the spirit and desire of the people who make Gatineau as it was developing its first environmental policy. Because it truly is all about the close ties between Gatineau residents and their surroundings. Ties that remain to be created, promoted and maintained. After all, it is our quality of life that is at stake.

The environment has become one of the main concerns of residents. Whether in terms of protecting natural habitats or climate change, everybody feels affected and wants to get involved. One of the observations of the scientific telephone survey conducted in July 2007 confirms that 98% of Gatineau residents believe that they have a role to play in managing and protecting the environment for future generations.

The Environmental Policy is part of a broader concept, that of sustainable development: “that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development is based on a long-term approach which takes into account the inextricable nature of the environmental, social and economic dimensions of development activities.”¹

Gatineau acknowledges that it has a significant role to play in contributing to improving the environment in a context of sustainable development. It must introduce tangible measures, without being afraid to take steps and influence its partners’ behaviour through its policies and by-laws.

When Gatineau’s other policies were being developed, those who took part in the consultations were already pointing out their interest in protecting the environment. The following are extracts from the Family Policy, the housing policy and the Policy on Sports, Recreation and the Outdoors:

“Work on the quality of the environment and contribute to the physical and mental well-being of families by controlling the sources of air, water and soil pollution”

– Family Policy

[translation] “Promote the different energy efficiency and environmental programs among residents, and encourage the development of residential projects that link to the main public transit corridors”

– Housing policy

“Upgrade its network of infrastructures and green spaces so as to meet the needs of the population as a whole...take the necessary steps to offer safe, accessible high-quality facilities that encourage people to engage in recreation, sports and outdoor activities on a regular basis.”

– Policy on Sports, Recreation and the Outdoors

This is the backdrop against which Gatineau decided to adopt an environmental policy so it could better coordinate its own activities and show the leadership that its residents expect of it.

¹ Sustainable Development Act, R.S.Q. c. D-8.1.1, section 2

THE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

The Commission consultative sur l'environnement l'environnement et le développement durable was created in 2006 at the request of the Municipal Council. The Commission was mandated to analyze the issues related to the environment and sustainable development for the municipal organization and the public, and to develop an environmental policy. To this end, the Commission worked with Gatineau's Service de l'urbanisme et du développement durable and its Service de l'environnement.

A good policy is always more than improvisation. It must be part of a process of research, thinking and action. Gatineau's Environmental Policy meets these high standards of quality, and is the outcome of impressive work between the spring of 2007 and the fall of 2008:

- research and analysis of other cities' environmental policies;
- review of Quebec's legislative and legal context;
- inventory of Gatineau's environmental initiatives;
- two consultation phases with partners;
- public hearing; and
- analysis of consultation reports – summary of the comments and suggestions received.

The inventory of environmental initiatives, for instance, was prepared in September 2007. It revealed that many of the projects that were under way already fit into an environmental rationale. The two main consultation phases subsequently carried out with Gatineau residents led to the clear realization that expectations were very high. Thus, every municipal department will have to pitch in, as well as our partners, if these expectations are to be met.



THE POLICY'S MAIN ORIENTATIONS, THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

The Policy itself translates into the main orientations, themes and objectives. This division structures the Policy, which can be broken down into a series of objectives corresponding to the main orientations for each and every theme. Although it has structured the contents of its Policy in this manner,

Gatineau nonetheless remains aware that when it comes to the environment, any attempt to categorize is bound to remain artificial given the interconnections between the different components. It targets specific themes without ever losing sight of the fact that every action must take place as part of an integrated whole.



The main orientations

The consultation process brought out a great many concerns and suggestions related to the environment. They have been divided into four main orientations.

Orientation 1: Showing leadership

What Gatineau wants to do:

- To provide a tangible expression of its commitment to being actively involved in improving the quality of the environment

How:

- Providing a model for residents to follow
- Involving all municipal departments in promoting exemplary actions in order to preserve, value and transmit its natural heritage to future generations
- Ensuring links among all municipal departments
- Standardizing approaches and reconciling efforts so that the Environmental Policy can be integrated into every activity and decision-making process in Gatineau
- Encouraging partners to act responsibly towards the environment

Orientation 2: Acting with a focus on sustainable development

What Gatineau wants to do:

- To apply integrated management to growth and the maintenance of assets

How:

- Adopting an approach that integrates environmental parameters, as well as social and economic criteria, in decision-making
- Adopting innovative approaches to land use planning, maintenance and management
- Encouraging and inspiring all partners to take part in order to reduce the impact on future generations of measures that affect the territory today

Orientation 3: Increasing awareness and educating to stimulate change and commitment

What Gatineau wants to do:

- To foster change and good environmental practices

How:

- Continuing to offer or introduce more training and awareness programs on environmental issues for municipal employees and elected officials
- Continuing to provide ways to facilitate environmental action on a day-to-day basis by people of all ages so they can become more actively involved
- Adapting awareness and education programs by selecting relevant information based on target groups
- Creating tools to foster discussion about environmental issues between Gatineau and its partners

Orientation 4: Monitoring, enforcing and strengthening by-laws

What Gatineau wants to do:

- To review the regulatory tools and ensure that they are implemented

How:

- Reviewing and strengthening by-laws
- Ensuring more compliance with current municipal environmental by-laws
- Fine-tuning planning tools to ensure sustainable prosperity



The themes and objectives

Seven main themes were picked by the Commission and used for the consultation process:

Water Air Soil Biodiversity Energy Quality of life Residual materials

For each theme, under each of its four main orientations, Gatineau set the following objectives. Only the objectives associated with the first two orientations are listed because those for the last two involve objectives of awareness and by-law implementation, which apply to every theme.

Water

– In order to preserve the water resource (drinking water, wastewater, runoff water, etc.), Gatineau intends to:

- Avoid overusing drinking water
- Provide and distribute quality drinking water at all times
- Optimize wastewater treatment and protect waterways and sources of drinking water
- Control wastewater runoff into storm sewers and waterways
- Protect shorelines
- Actively engage in the sustainable management of the Gatineau, Lièvre and Ottawa River watersheds
- Plan for better drainage management
- Improve the management of waste snow

Air

– In order to improve air quality (promoting sustainable transportation, reducing greenhouse gas and smog, etc.), Gatineau commits to:

- Characterize and reduce greenhouse gas produced by it and the community
- Continue improving the supply of public transit
- Reduce automobile traffic
- Foster efficient merchandise transportation
- Encourage active transportation modes, such as walking and biking
- Help fight smog

Soil

– In order to preserve the soil (territory, farmland, contaminated land, etc.), Gatineau aims to:

- Limit urban sprawl
- Pursue the protection and enhancement of farmland
- Study the feasibility of restoring contaminated land

Biodiversity

– In order to preserve biodiversity (trees, species and habitat, etc.) on public and private land, Gatineau plans to:

- Foster the preservation of trees and woodlands
- Protect wetlands and waterways
- Identify and protect precarious species and habitats

Energy

– In order to reduce the consumption of energy, Gatineau chooses to:

- Build and renovate municipal buildings according to ecological practices
- Optimize energy consumption for municipal use
- Support measures that encourage the construction of eco-energetic buildings and a sustainable built environment
- Promote the use of sustainable energy

Quality of life

– In order to provide a better quality of life (tranquility, harmonization of natural and built habitats, etc.) Gatineau commits to:

- Fight invasive species on public and private properties
- Equitably manage parks and green spaces throughout the Gatineau territory by taking into account the needs of current and future generations
- Improve neighbourliness and safety in urban villages
- Promote access to rivers and the public development of shorelines
- Adapt to climate change
- Maintain and intensify measures aimed at reducing sound pollution
- Control harmful species

Residual materials

– In order to ensure a sustainable and responsible approach, Gatineau commits to:

- Actively pursue the implementation of its residual materials management plan



*“I remain hopeful. There are solutions.
It is up to us to apply them.”
(translation)
David Suzuki, geneticist and ecologist*

THE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

The Environmental Policy represents a firm commitment on the part of the Municipal Council to introduce tangible measures to protect the environment and improve the quality of life of Gatineau residents.

The Environmental Policy’s implementation within the municipal administration is the responsibility of the Direction générale adjointe à la gestion du territoire. The Service de l’urbanisme et du développement durable and the Service de l’environnement are responsible for the development, implementation, assessment and advancement of the action plan that will be associated with the Environmental Policy.

The Policy sets objectives for medium and long-term results for both current and future generations. For its part, the action plan will cover five years and is linked to the budget process. Its development called for strategic choices, determined by our territory and the main issues connected to it. It will serve as an extension of the Policy and will specify the means that should be taken and the resources that will be required to achieve its objectives.

In order to ensure that the Policy leads to tangible and sustainable results, Gatineau must also be able to count on its partners, which will have to commit and become fully involved in achieving objectives. Environmental action can only be contemplated in a global perspective, where everyone takes part and everyone benefits.

To measure the progress made and continue to properly identify the challenges, an annual report will be presented to the Commission consultative sur l’environnement et le développement durable. It will present its recommendations to the Municipal Council to ensure that the Policy’s implementation will continue to correspond to the vision of Gatineau residents.

By taking part in the Commission’s sessions and, ultimately, the decisions of the Municipal Council, and also proceeding step by step, the partners will be able to follow the progress of the initiatives and results.

*“We do not inherit the land from our
ancestors, we borrow it from our children.”
(African proverb)*

CONCLUSION

This Policy is a fine example of commitment, not only on the part of the municipal administration but also on the part of the every partner living and working as part of Gatineau. Developed with a view to sustainable development, it targets a set of behavioural changes to better preserve the environment and the quality of life of its inhabitants.

In order to accomplish this, the Policy sets out orientations and objectives to preserve its resources, including water, soil and biodiversity, and to reduce energy consumption and the production of residual materials, and finally to improve air and, more globally, the quality of life of its residents.

Through this Environmental Policy, Gatineau invites all of its partners—the public, organizations, institutions and businesses—to join together to achieve the goals: to preserve, maintain and improve our environmental heritage.

Many of the partners are already hard at work, and a number of initiatives that are under way will continue in parallel with the Policy. It provides a common orientation to the activities, but cannot cover everything. Thinking nature means contemplating all kinds of changes. While some things can be done immediately, others have to be done more gradually and need time. This is normal.

We should commit on a day-to-day basis, and do one thing at a time, because it is when everyone takes part that our Environmental Policy will start to take off...and hold the course for years to come.

“A greener city in the palm of your hand!”
is your business, is everybody’s business.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our gratitude to all of the partners who contributed to the development of this Policy. Specifically, we would like to thank the representatives of the different municipal departments and the members of the Municipal Council for their precious cooperation. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to the people who took part in the consultation process for their ideas and suggestions, all reflections of their tremendous interest in the environment. Thank you also to the members of the Commission consultative sur l'environnement et le développement durable, whose tenacity and passion helped this project come to fruition and, finally a very special thanks to Gatineau Mayor Marc Bureau and to the Chair of the Commission consultative sur l'environnement et le développement durable, Patrice Martin, for their unwavering support in this edifying project.

The following are the current members of the Commission consultative sur l'environnement et le développement durable:

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We also thank the former members of the Commission

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