

# Massawippi land deals are final

By Paul Cherry  
SHERBROOKE

**L**andowners in North Hatley who recently purchased land from Canadian Pacific Railways have nothing to worry about, says a representative of the company.

A legal notice paid for by the CPR, appearing in a French-language daily on the weekend, stated the company's real estate division was cancelling its agreement with a landowner's association to sell parcels of land along Massawippi River.

"The sales that were completed are final. Anyone who has purchased land has nothing to be worried about," said CPR representative Michel Spénard referring to the land the railway company abandoned years ago.

The cancelled agreement in question was between a division of the CPR and the Lake Massawippi East Shore Owner's and Users' Association. Spénard said the group did not own the land but was working as an intermediary in the landowner's interests and the cancellation of the agreement has no bearing on closed deals.

Spénard said the railway company is cancelling the agreement because there are still parcels of land available for sale and that the CPR has been kept in the dark about their status. The agreement was signed in 1991.

"We have been trying to find out about the status of the available land for awhile. We even sent several lawyer's letters for an answer but they won't answer us," Spénard said.

The Record was unable to reach Michel Cléroux or Michael Allatt, the association's president and former president respectively, for comment.

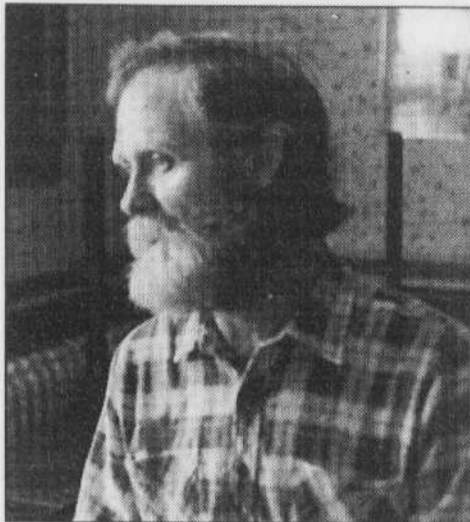
"What we're trying to do is move the project ahead somehow. We want to finalize the sale of all the remaining lots of land in that area," Spénard said.

The company's legal notice recommends that people interested in purchasing land contact them directly.

"We had an agreement that the association would collect the money and take care of that end of it, now we're taking it over. It's gotten to the point where our real estate division had to find some other way of dealing with the existing land," Spénard said.

In an article that appeared in the French-language daily yesterday, Allatt said approximately 300 riverside residents bought parcels of land and the remaining parcels were either inaccessible by foot or were parts of marshland.

In 1991 the association's objective was to group North Hatley residents who own land along the Massawippi River and purchase the parcels in an effort to block a bicycle trail from being built. At the time, the group Sentiers



Keith Baxter said CP evaluators estimated the cost of land along Massawippi at \$10 million - a figure the group found steep.

Massawippi - a non-profit organization composed of bicycling advocates and nature lovers - was lobbying the municipality to create a bicycle path along the Massawippi using the land left vacant by the railway line.

"By buying up the land along the river's shore people could put up their own docks and create waterfront properties," said Sentiers Massawippi president Keith Baxter. "We wanted to create a trail along the river. It's understandable why some people didn't want the trail because in some cases it would have been very close to their houses and the trail would go right by their bathroom or kitchen windows."

Baxter said when Sentiers Massawippi was interested in the trail CP evaluators estimated the land's value at approximately \$10 million which the lobby group found steep.

Many landowners in North Hatley were dead set against the idea of having a bike trail run through what was essentially their backyards. In most cases purchasing a parcel of land meant the owner's property would stretch out to the nearby waterway. An existing bicycle path that runs through Sherbrooke, Lennoxville and many other municipalities in the area now ends in North Hatley.

Yesterday Baxter said he was unaware of which parcels of land are still available but did say if there are any suitable patches of land still for sale - and connected to existing trails - Sentiers Massawippi would definitely be interested in purchasing them.

"For the time being though we are concentrating on getting a trail made in the Tomifobia River Valley," Baxter said.

The group is currently having problems in Ogden where the municipality has ruled that the trail is illegal under its municipal bylaws. Parts of the abandoned railway line in Ogden go through agricultural zones.

## BRIEFS

### Telephone troubles

Rock Forest

Residents of Rock Forest are being advised the telephone system in the town has been out of commission since Friday afternoon. Technicians are working on the problem and lines should be operational very soon.

### Tax break for new businesses

Sherbrooke

The downtown business group SIDAC for the King St. - Wellington sector announced last week a new tax credit will be made available to all new businesses in the sector beginning next September 1. For their first year of operation, new members will be reimbursed 100 per cent of their dues and 50 per cent for second and third years of operation. Businesses are taxed at a rate of 5.08 per cent of the rental value of their establishment as determined by the city of Sherbrooke. A business valued at \$30,000 would pay an annual fee of \$1500.

### Fund-raiser at former military college

Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu

To mark what would have been the 45th anniversary of the Saint-Jean Military College, former graduates, professors, honorary members and friends will launch a fund-raising activity in conjunction with the new Fort St-Jean campus. The first ever fund-raising event will be held April 12 beginning at 6 o'clock followed by a dinner at 7 under the chairmanship of former commanding officers of the CMR St-Jean. "The main objective of the organizers of the event is to help students on the campus as well as the Corporation du Fort St-Jean to maintain its academic excellence," said Lafrance, himself a graduate of CMR St-Jean. For information or donations call Yvon Lafrance at 514-357-9097 or the foundation office at 514-358-6809 or 1-800-949-2375 ext 6809.

### Speaker is collector of things past

Sherbrooke

The Quebec Family History Society will welcome guest speaker Marcel Benoit, a Magog photographer at a meeting in Lachine Tuesday evening April 8. Benoit has an interest in Canadian and French genealogy and photography and is a collector of old books and photographs. For information call Betty Chalmers 514-738-6604.

### Administrative shuffle

Sherbrooke

Officials with the ministry of transport announced a reorganization of its Eastern Townships administration this week. Service centres in Lac Megantic and Cookshire will now come under the same regional office. However, in spite of the administrative change, each office will continue to operate as two separate entities.

### Local farms, businesses receive fines

Sherbrooke

Several Eastern Townships farms and businesses were fined for contraventions to Quebec's law governing food, farm and fish products.

Restaurant Café Ben Lee in Deauville was fined \$250 for failing to maintain food at an acceptable temperature. Marché Poisson on Marquette St. in Sherbrooke received a \$250 fine when inspectors discovered workers not wearing hairnets. Restaurant Le Dragon Doré in Cookshire was fined \$250 for failing to maintain food at a safe temperature. Bar Salon L'épervier in Coaticook will pay \$250 for serving food without a license. Ti-Nomme Pizzeria was fined \$500 for operating without a license, but owners have since moved to a new location. Two farms were also fined \$175 each, one for failing to have individual hand wipes available for milking, and the other for an elevated number of leucine cells. La Maison Wang received a \$650 fine for operating a tourist establishment in Orford without a permit. The Township's businesses were among 69 in Quebec to receive fines totalling \$29,800 between January 9 and February 28, 1997.

### Historic churches receive grants

Sherbrooke

The Immaculate-Conception and Saint-Jean-Baptiste churches in Sherbrooke and the Eglise Saint-Janvier of Weedon are among those that will benefit from a Quebec government program to assist historic churches in Quebec. The three churches will share \$1,375,000 in grants to cover 85 per cent of the cost of renovations and repairs to the historic buildings.