

Rail bridge: North Hatley to decide its fate

By Dan Hawaleshka

NORTH HATLEY — The mayor of this town says he will ask councillors to give residents a say in the future of the abandoned CPR bridge which spans the Massawippi River.

"I will suggest to my colleagues next week that they have a special meeting at which people can express their views," said North Hatley Mayor Irène Pelletier Monday.

The meeting is scheduled for next Tuesday.

"I have a feeling the council could easily be swayed toward keeping the bridge," Pelletier said.

Canadian Pacific Railway recently phoned North Hatley to ask what the town wants to do with the bridge, he said. Pelletier said he didn't know if CPR wants to sell it.

"There are still a lot of things we don't know."

The CPR message came to light last week at a regular town council meeting.

A petition is being circulated by a group calling for the creation of a combination walking-skiing-cycling path along the abandoned 54-kilometre stretch of the former Beebe Subdivision.

DELAY DECISION
A decision on whether the bridge should be kept or demolished

should be delayed, says the Sentier Massawippi petition.

"All citizens should be given the opportunity to inform themselves on all pertinent aspects of the question," it says.

Pelletier said the cost of keeping the bridge will be the dominant factor in deciding what to do with it.

"We have to watch every move we make in municipalities," he said.

North Hatley resident and Sentier Massawippi member Morency Rioux heads the petition effort.

"The goal of the petition is to tell people they may lose their bridge," Rioux said, adding he wants a public debate.

Rioux doesn't hide his motives. He said he wants the bridge for one thing: "to be part of Sentier Massawippi."

Rioux worries that with the bridge gone any hope for a linear park along the shore of Lake Massawippi would be dashed.

At least 55 names have been collected supporting Rioux's stand to open the debate on the bridge.

"Personally I would like to see it stay there," Mayor Pelletier said. "It could be a boardwalk or whatever." He repeated that a lack of money stands in the way.

IT COSTS MONEY

"For us it means spending money. It's as simple as that."

Sherbrooke University historian Peter Southam, also a resident of North Hatley, signed the petition. He calls for "a full airing of people's views."

Southam stopped short of endorsing the linear park.

"I signed this for quite a different reason," Southam said, "because I hate to see the bridge destroyed without looking at historical interest."

The locations of railway lines had a lot to do with the development of the Eastern Townships, he said. The loss of train stations and of rail lines means the loss of an important part of the region's history, he said.

In the 1900s "the region controlled access to the American seaboard," because freight had to be shipped south to bypass the frozen

St-Lawrence River.

"The railway explains why North Hatley became a resort," he said. Wealthy American tourists brought their own railways cars to the area to spend their summers by the lake, he said.

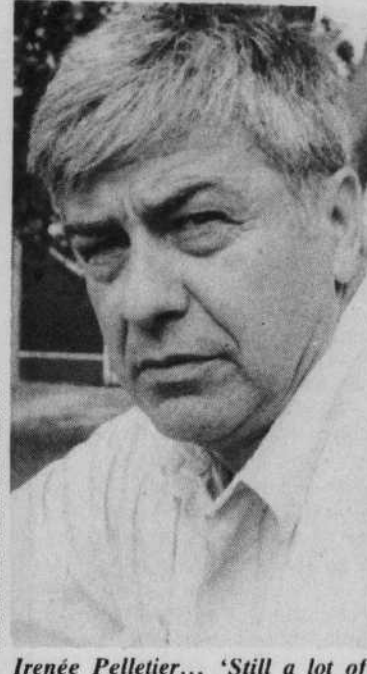
"The railways are the basis of all the towns in the Eastern Townships." And since the 1950s that history has been disappearing, he said.

Everyone interviewed agreed the bridge is in fine shape, renovated within the last 10 years.

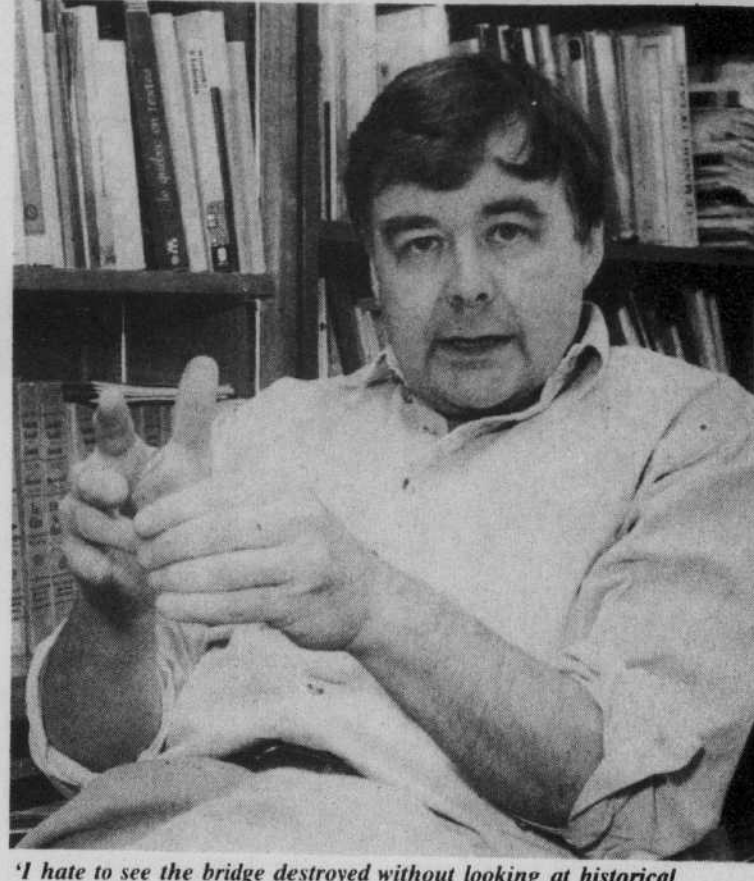
"I see the bridge as part of a whole," Southam said.



Will this bridge stay or will it be demolished?



Irène Pelletier... 'Still a lot of things we don't know.'



'I hate to see the bridge destroyed without looking at historical interest,' says historian Peter Southam.

Erasmus: 'What a national chief should be'

By Bob Cox

WINNIPEG (CP) — Candidates for the leadership of the Assembly of First Nations took turns raising the volume on a chorus of defiance as they made their final pitches for votes on Monday.

In languages ranging from Ojibwa and Cree to Gitksan and Mohawk, six people vying to replace Georges Erasmus promised to deal strongly with provincial and federal governments to defend native rights.

"The white man... leads a different life, but he does not control us," Ovide Mercredi said in Cree to applause from more than a thousand people jammed into the Winnipeg Convention Centre.

Mercredi, of Manitoba, promised to be tough rather than gentle with governments and not permit a white agenda to keep natives as subordinates.

Mike Mitchell, a Mohawk from the Akwesasne reserve near Cor-

nwall, Ont., won applause by saying natives should never again negotiate with governments without first setting their own agenda.

NATIVES GAIN
"We are gaining and we should



Georges Erasmus... 'Embarrassed by the show.'

never go backwards," said Mitchell.

Speeches by the candidates were their last chance to sway chiefs who will vote today for a new national chief.

Phil Fontaine, a Manitoba Ojibwa, said natives should seize their current chance to put their agenda at the top of constitutional reform.

"We want our languages, our cultures, our nationhood, our lands, our waters, our resources and our communities — everything we are — firmly entrenched in the Constitution," said Fontaine.

Other candidates were less strident.

Bill Montour, a Mohawk from the Six Nations reserve near Brantford, Ont., condemned the adversarial approach and "negativism" of many native leaders. He said it has produced a severely

strained relationship with non-native politicians.

Outgoing national chief Georges Erasmus stayed neutral but had a few parting words of advice.

Erasmus said the natives are now at a point where they can put energy into their own communities, instead of merely battling for recognition of their rights.

The focus should be on employing natives, building better houses and raising children who can speak their native languages and understand their indigenous culture, said Erasmus.

"We don't want to spend the next generation using the best that we have to talk to the outside," he

said. "We need to turn our energies inward."

The assembly represents about 500,000 status Indians — half of Canada's natives.

On Sunday Erasmus was celebrated as a statesman and native leader who was instrumental in pushing aboriginal issues to the top of the national agenda.

"Today we're on the map," said Konrad Sioui, Quebec vice-chief of the Assembly of First Nations, as he paid tribute to the six years that Erasmus served as head of the assembly.

"It will never be the same any more."

More than 700 people — inclu-

ding Indian chiefs, native artists, leaders of other native organizations and Conservative, Liberal and New Democrat politicians — packed into the Winnipeg Convention Centre to say goodbye to Erasmus.

The 42-year-old Déné is not running again. He is planning to take a vacation from politics.

The evening honoring him was filled with thanks, compliments, humor and a few tears.

Native groups from across the country gave gifts including blankets, a hunting rifle, paintings and a garbled talking stick, given by Vancouver Island natives to signify Erasmus is a chief speaker.

Circle of chiefs to talk constitution

By Bob Cox

WINNIPEG (CP) — Indian chiefs decided Monday to renew their efforts to come up with a unified constitutional position.

Delegates to the Assembly of First Nations conference voted unanimously to form a "first nations circle" on the Constitution to start work by July 1.

And they agreed to hold a special assembly on the Constitution within six months.

It's the largest national effort by the assembly to get natives to

agree on constitutional positions since the early 1980s prior to a series of first ministers meetings that failed to entrench natives' right to self-government in the Constitution.

A number of chiefs said they want to be suggesting changes instead of just reacting to federal government proposals that will be made this fall.

"I don't see where we should be waiting for the federal government to come out with their initiatives," said Joe Norton, chief of the Kahnawake Mohawk reserve

south of Montreal.

"We have to come out as soon as possible."

The first nations circle would be separate from an advisory panel on native issues that Constitutional Affairs Minister Joe Clark suggested.

Clark has floated the idea of having a panel of about 10 native experts to advise the parliamentary committee that will hammer out final details of federal constitutional proposals.

HAS WARNING

Norton warned that natives should be careful and suspicious of why Clark and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney are now so willing to include natives at the constitutional table after excluding them before.

Natives, who enjoy public support right now, shouldn't allow themselves to be used to rebuild the popularity of the Conservative government, he said.

"This is a government that turned its backs on native people," said Norton as he talked about the use of the army against Mohawk Warriors in Quebec last summer.

"Let's be very vigilant about this situation. Let's look at the timing of it."



Did that smooth Lincoln ride put the driver to sleep?

A car driven by a 65-year-old man hit a highway sign near Bromont Monday afternoon. Quebec Police Force Cst. Michel Larivière, said the driver, Georges Altiparmakis of Longueuil, probably fell asleep at the wheel of his 1988 Lincoln Continental.

Larivière said the car was travelling at least 100 km per hour and left the highway. The right front bumper hit a sign announcing the Bromont exit. Its cement base was torn out.

Altiparmakis was apparently wearing a seatbelt which Larivière said probably saved his life. When police arrived Altiparmakis was conscious and already in the ambulance.

He was taken to hospital in Granby where nurse Marlene Lettre said he was conscious and his injuries seemed minor.

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U.S. & Foreign: 1 year-	\$159.00
6 months-	\$97.00
3 months-	\$65.00
1 month-	\$34.00

These prices do not include GST

Back copies of The Record are available at the following prices: Copies ordered within a month of publication: 60¢ per copy. Copies ordered more than a month after publication: \$1.10 per copy.

Established February 9, 1897, incorporating the Sherbrooke Gazette (est. 1837) and the Sherbrooke Examiner (est. 1879).

Published Monday to Friday by The Record Division, Groupe Quebecor Inc. Offices and plant located at 2850 Delorme Street, Sherbrooke, Quebec, J1K 1A1.
Second class registration number 1064.

Member of Canadian Press
Member of the
Audit Bureau of Circulation

Weather

Tuesday, clearing out in the morning. High 24. Outlook for Wednesday: Variable cloudiness and cooler.

Doonesbury
BY GARRY TRUDEAU

HEY, ISN'T THAT MIKE DOONESBURY?
HEY MIKE! LOVE YOUR WORK!

BRavo! GREAT PORTFOLIO!
WONDERFUL TV SPOTS, MIKE! THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES!

AMERICA'S LAID-OFF JUNIOR AD EXECUTIVES ARE THE REAL HEROES!
THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

THANK YOU! I LOVE YOU!
MOM, THAT MAN... THIS IS NEW YORK, HONEY. DON'T STARE.