

Message- President of the Executive Committee- Doug Dempster

The Association Lac Sir-John assumed legal existence on 20 July 2023, and was formally stood up with meetings on 19 and 21 August. It is a non-profit organization with some important financial advantages, including no corporate income taxes, the ability to receive municipal grants and inexpensive insurance through the Union des Municipalites de Quebec (UMQ).

Much more important, however, is that ALSJ is an inclusive and democratic organization to ensure the best interests of our property owners for the long term.

Our first AGM will be held on Saturday 23 September at 10 AM at the Gore community hall. The agenda is attached. The main purpose of this first meeting is to look forward and to establish our priorities for the future. There will be a Q&A session. Members will be asked to vote on the budget and on nominations for director and officer appointments.

Please note that reports on the previous 2022-23 year will be covered at the Sijolm, Inc AGM on Saturday 14 October. I am often asked what happens to Sijolm with the creation of ALSJ. The short answer is that it:

- continues to exist as a for-profit corporation,
- continues to own the land,
- continues to be owned by its shareholders,
- continues to delegate voting authority to five trustees, and
- continues to seek recognition of its land as a private nature reserve under Quebec law.

There is now an ALSJ- Sijolm agreement that sets out mutual obligations, including the eventual sale of roads and beaches to the Association.

What are our ALSJ priorities? Clearly the first year of operations will see consolidation after a period of dramatic change. Equally we face climate change, which has adversely affected our degraded road network and reinforced the need for emergency preparedness. Your executive committee has identified five priorities for 2023-24:

1. Road Maintenance and Improvement Task Force. This is our top priority. We propose a road maintenance and improvement task force to develop a problem statement and conduct a planning and scoping study, with options, for consideration at the 2024 AGM. Our roads were initially developed in the 1950's and 1960's with round pit stone for primarily summer use. Today gravel road design starts with good drainage and uses crushed stone that holds its shape and drains water off the surface. After many years of dragging, our roads are scraped off and easily eroded. Drainage is poor- our ditches and culverts are full of eroded material. Our roadsides are overgrown, reducing visibility and creating risk due to dead and leaning trees. Valiant episodic patching approaches are simply not enough. We need a costed multi-year plan to improve our roads to the safe, all-year standard our residents need.
2. Emergency Preparedness Task Force. The last two winters have seen some prolonged power and internet outages. This coming winter is forecast to be a challenging due to the El Nino effect.

The small forest fire of 2021 and the derecho of May 2022 have also demonstrated the need for emergency preparedness and contingency plans, both for property owners and the community, in conjunction with municipal first responders. We need to be ready for falling trees and fires, especially in potentially dry conditions. Our roadsides need to be cleared to provide firebreaks and to eliminate vulnerable trees that can block roads and bring down power lines.

3. Environment-Land. We face significant erosion on Loggers Beach (Cezair-Cormier- Donald-Boisvert area) located at the foot of two large mountains. Loggers Beach renovation will be our beach priority for 2024. We also face localized infestations of invasive and noxious plants (Purple Loosestrife, Japanese Knotweed and Poison Ivy). We will continue our efforts to suppress them.
4. Environment- Water. This past year we conducted lake water tests with the Quebec Réseau de Surveillance des Lacs (RSVL) program and conducted an aquatic plant inventory. There was a proliferation in aquatic plants this past summer, and we need to know what is happening and what can be done. Our third summer of lake water level stability measurements by Peter Nicholson shows no progress towards a stable water level situation supporting recreation and waterfowl habitat. Our Association has agreed to be part of a new group with the Alliance of Gore Lake Associations to propose solutions for the flows and levels in the Williams Creek watershed. Lac Sir-John is at the end of this multi-lake watershed and is affected by upstream flows. Lachute is also conducting a hydrological study to support the dams they operate on our lake.
5. Highway 329 danger and noise. Although motorcycle noise diminished somewhat in 2023, we continue to deal with risks to drivers on entering the highway at all three entrances. Our residents experience high vehicle and especially truck noise. We need to continue pressure at the municipal and provincial levels, in concert with partners, for speed control and better signage.

Both the executive committee and board of directors have considered the level of our dues. Most of you have experienced the effect of inflation. Our road service costs have increased well above the rate of inflation. A single day of road contracted work now costs \$1500, well above the pre-pandemic rates. After careful consideration, a rate increase of \$40 per household (7.5%) has been proposed. This will bring the full dues cost to \$569 for 2023-24. In addition, the cost of dues for non-full dues payers will be as follows:

- Households directly off highway 329- 45%, or \$256, and
- Lots without dwellings- 25%, or \$142.

I would like to thank all our volunteers. If you would like to contribute to one of our two task forces this coming year, or participate on environmental or other committees, please let one of us know.

Doug Dempster, President