

ENVIRONMENTAL AND TRANSITION POLICY



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An environmental policy - Why?

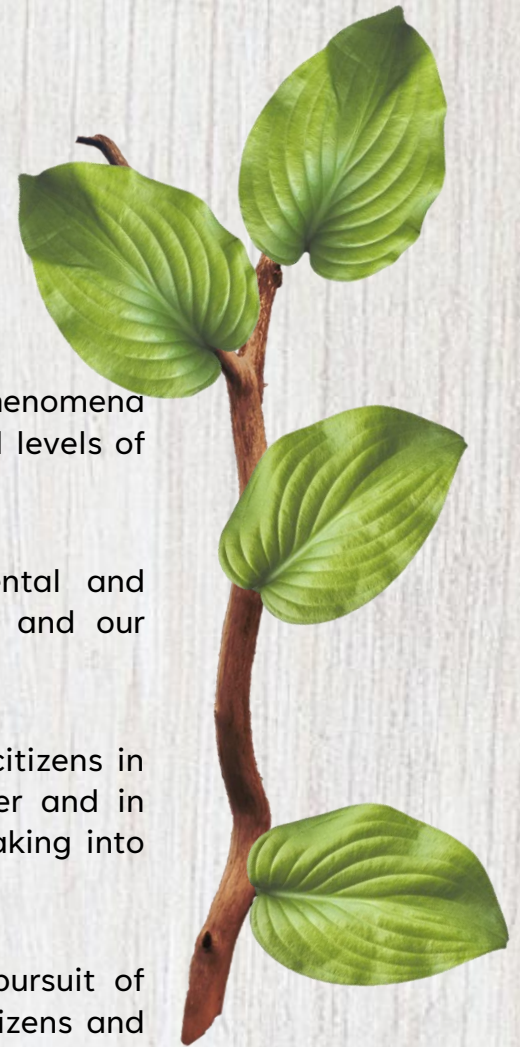
Questions about the protection of our environment are becoming more and more important in the collective consciousness and have been for several decades.

It seems more than ever obvious that we are all concerned by environmental phenomena and that "thinking globally and acting locally and individually" is required at all levels of human intervention.

The Municipality of Morin-Heights is pleased to implement its Environmental and Transition Policy. It is personalized according to our activities, our priorities and our concerns in relation to the environment.

This policy is a tool to guide the Municipal Council, its administration and the citizens in the management of their activities so that it is done in a responsible manner and in accordance with the principles of sustainable development, that is to say, by taking into account the economic, social and environmental aspects of our municipality.

The Environmental and Transition Policy thus provides a framework for the pursuit of actions to protect our environment and improve the quality of life of current citizens and future generations.



News from the Mayor

Environmental issues are essential to the survival of our planet and our slogan "In harmony with nature" is not only a way of life for Morinheighters but a deep desire of the administration, the Municipal Council and the citizens to put in place strategies so that everyone has the information, the tools and the means to make our beautiful municipality a place where it is good to live, in harmony with the beautiful nature that surrounds us.

To this end, the members of the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) have developed an environmental and transition policy that reflects the priorities of the citizens who responded to the survey, the public hearings or who participated in the content of this policy.

Whether it is the protection of the forest cover, the preservation of wetlands and aquatic environments, the respect of biodiversity and the protection of fragile environments, the reduction of pollution or the maintenance of an optimal quality of life, we are proud of this policy which reflects the various priority environmental sectors and of the action plan to be undertaken in order to be eco-responsible as a citizen and as a municipality.



I would like to thank the members of the EAC as well as all the citizens who participated in the development of this policy which is the result of a long process of discussion, research and analysis.

Every action counts and together we can make a difference. Together, we can ensure that we continue to live in harmony with nature, protect our environment and leave our children and future generations a great place to live.

Tim Watchorn

Message from the Environmental Advisory Committee's President

The Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) is pleased to present the results of its deliberations, development work and public consultations to the Town's elected officials in this proposed Environmental and Transition Policy.

The EAC is made up of an elected official, an administrator and citizens whose role is to assess the situation and make recommendations to the Municipal Council on priority environmental areas, objectives and potential actions to be taken. Thus, following several meetings with experts, environmental groups and citizens, the study of several environmental policies, formulations and reformulations, the use of the expertise of the municipality's employees and the results of public consultations, we have come up with this proposal for the Environmental and Transition Policy.

We are well aware that the constant evolution of environmental issues requires vigilance to ensure our quality of life. Thus, this policy will adapt to the elements of reality. It provides for a follow-up mechanism for the policy and future action plans as well as for information, consultation and discussion with citizens. We want everyone to feel proud, challenged and personally responsible for the application of the policy and to notice and benefit from its effects on our environment.





Richard Cusson





Principles and Orientations

The Municipal Council is guided by the following principles:

-  A commitment to do more and better;
-  A commitment to continue to effectively manage the impacts of environmental management;
-  A commitment to comply with laws and government policies;
-  A commitment to consider social acceptability for projects with a significant environmental impact.

The Environmental and Transition Policy targets an orientation advocating the leadership of elected officials, the transparency of the management of files related to the environment and finally, aims at mobilizing and empowering all citizens of Morin-Heights.



Characteristics of the Municipality of Morin-Heights

The Municipality of Morin-Heights is a small Laurentian village with a population of nearly 5,000. Its economy is mainly based on tourism and vacationing; however, more and more people are settling there and making it their home.

Its vast territory is made up of natural spaces, low mountains, lakes, outdoor trails and nature is what connects all Morinheighters.

It is essential to ensure the preservation of the protection and improvement of the quality of the environment, the preservation of the health of the citizens, the prudent use of natural resources and finally, the promotion on the municipal and regional level of measures intended to preserve our environment. Preserving and ensuring the sustainability of our territory will be done by informing, by enhancing our assets, by promoting development in a sustainable manner, by involving citizens, merchants, entrepreneurs and vacationers in order to live in harmony with nature.





**Priority
environmental
sectors**

Following the citizen consultations, the consideration of memoires received from citizens as well as discussions between the members of the EAC, five environmental sectors were identified as priorities in Morin-Heights.

Preservation of wetlands
and aquatic environments



Protection of
forest cover



Reduction
of pollution



Respect for biodiversity
and protection of fragile
environments



Maintenance of
an optimal quality
of life





Protection of forest cover

The forest cover marks our identity as Laurentians and we owe it to ourselves to respect it and take the greatest care of it. It brings us health, well-being, rest...

The forest cover contributes to the ecology of our municipality and it is precious to preserve it by controlling large-scale real estate development projects.

Trees and soils help minimize climate change, drought, increased summer temperatures and fire hazards. They recharge the water table on which we depend. In addition, they absorb water, thereby reducing erosion and landslides.

The Municipality of Morin-Heights is mainly a residential territory where green and natural spaces are an integral part of its citizens' lives. The power to regulate the protection of the forest cover is the responsibility of the Regional County Municipalities (MRC). It can therefore regulate or restrict the cutting of trees on its territory in order to ensure the protection of the forest cover. The preservation of wooded areas is an essential element in the sustainable management of natural environments.

In addition, in our environment, the aerobic corridor, which is popular with cross-country skiers, allows all enthusiasts to practice cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, cycling and walking. The downhill ski mountain attracts vacationers as well as residents and the landscape makes Morin-Heights a place where living in harmony with nature is not just a slogan.

It is harmony with nature that will preserve the harmony in our community.

Protection of forest cover - Objectives

🎯 Preserve forests and woodlands

🎯 Limit deforestation

🎯 Minimize heat islands

🎯 Encourage sustainable development for private lands

🎯 Prevent fires



The following table presents the objectives and actions selected to protect the forest cover.

Preserve forests and woodlands. Limit deforestation. Minimize heat islands:

- Revision of the urban plan to increase lot sizes for residential construction;
- Identification of the main heat islands and mitigation actions;
- Land acquisition by the municipality;
- Development and deforestation control for new construction;
- Limiting the development of new streets;
- Establishing a referendum process to consult the public on major real estate development projects;
- Regulation of the surrender of 10% of the area of a development by a contractor.

Encourage sustainable development for private lands:

- Information on the importance of plant diversification;
- Writing of articles on the subject in " Info Morin-Heights ", Environment section;
- Facilitation of plant and tree diversification: suggestion of plants and trees of the year.


Prevent fires:

- Identification of the main fire risks, prevention through information and prevention plan;
- Alerting the public via the CITAM emergency call system and/or other available communication platforms when open fires are prohibited;
- Search for solutions for the disposal of branches/chipping/composting;
- Information package for citizens, developed jointly with the fire department.





Preservation of wetlands and aquatic environments



Water is a natural resource and Morin-Heights has many rivers, lakes and wetlands. It is a precious indicator of the quality of our environment. We must pay particular attention to it in order to ensure its protection in the face of urbanization.

In addition to providing our drinking water from the water table, this environment provides essential ecological services in terms of habitat for aquatic and semi-aquatic plants, beneficial to microbes, plants, animals and humans.

However, the fragility of these water sources must not be overlooked. It is imperative that we all take responsibility for preserving and enhancing this precious resource.

Preservation of wetlands and aquatic environments

- Objectives

- 🎯 Making water protection and conservation a top priority
- 🎯 Promote aquatic life and biodiversity
- 🎯 Control the transport of contaminants to and through the water system
- 🎯 Limit spills of contaminants and phosphates
- 🎯 Preventing eutrophication of lakes and rivers
- 🎯 Maintain bathing quality of lakes and rivers
- 🎯 Limit the risks of erosion, flooding and inundation
- 🎯 Ensuring the quality of drinking water



The following table presents the objectives and actions selected for the preservation of wetlands and aquatic environments.

Promote aquatic life and biodiversity:

- Action plan to preserve optimal aquatic life;
- Use of the Rivière-à-Simon water system for university projects;
- Maintain baseline data, e.g., wetland area, water quality indicator (Quebec Water Atlas).

Control the transport of contaminants to and through the water system:

- Identification of the main sources of contaminants;
- Identification of major tributaries and watersheds of lakes and rivers;
- Development of options for sustainable stormwater management (Municipal Water Management Action Plan);
- Avoid pushing snow near areas where it will quickly end up in a lake when the snow melts;
- Avoiding the pumping of water from rivers by spreading trucks;
- Monitoring of water and wetland quality;
- Installation of barriers during construction around a water body to prevent contamination.

Limit spills of contaminants and phosphates:

- Identification of the main phosphate and sediment inputs and action plan to limit their impact;
- Information on the negative impacts of household phosphate products and fertilizers on the health of lakes and rivers (regulation);
- Reinforcement of the septic tank emptying follow-up program (registry);
- Encouragement (incentive) of secondary sanitation facilities;
- Reminder of the uses and products prohibited in the protection zone;
- Citizen awareness through the municipal web, Info Morin-Heights or flyers in order to eliminate the use of phosphates or other products promoting the invasion of algae.



Preventing eutrophication of lakes and rivers:

- Status of aquatic weeds;
- Understanding and information on water flow through ditches and rivers;
- Preservation of lakes and rivers through the implementation of smart gardens (identification of areas to be preserved and work required);
- Installation of retention basins and ditches to control water runoff and limit salt and sand inputs from roads located within 30 meters of a lake or river;
- Reducing the application of abrasives and reducing their discharge into ditches.

Maintain bathing quality of lakes and rivers:

- Water quality monitoring and information to the population (annual test);
- Information on the application of abrasives and reduction of their discharge into ditches.

Limit the risks of erosion, flooding and inundation:

- Identification of risk areas and action plan;
- Requirement for water management strategies and/or structures to be in place when granting excavation and construction permit;
- Zero Runoff Regulation;
- Development of a contingency plan, by the Municipality, to prevent flooding following rapid melting of water.

Ensure the quantity and quality of drinking water:

- Identification and protection of surface and groundwater sources;
- Reinforcement of water use regulations;
- Introduction of water meters for commercial facilities;
- Promotion and information on responsible water consumption;
- Use of surface water for secondary needs;
- Low cost/free water harvesting barrel offer;
- Plan an accompaniment, for the residents, on their artesian well.





**Respect for
biodiversity
and
protection
of fragile
environments**

Protecting the environment also means considering the biodiversity present in our municipality. Biodiversity is the variety of animal and plant species in nature. A great diversity refers to the variety, quantity, health and stability of species (plants and animals) on our territory. The human footprint tends to decrease biodiversity.

Morin-Heights has many natural and protected areas on its territory. Ensuring a sustainable protection of species and habitats and preserving the ecosystem must remain a priority.

Respect for biodiversity and protection of fragile environments - Objectives

- 🎯 Carry out an ecological inventory of our municipality
- 🎯 Use the grounds or gardens as a space for biodiversity and encourage pollinating insects
- 🎯 Controlling exotic, terrestrial and aquatic invasive species
- 🎯 Prohibit the use of contaminated backfill



The following table presents the objectives and actions selected for biodiversity and the protection of fragile environments.

Identify rare or endangered species on the territory:

- Identification and work with the botanist/naturalist to identify the specificities on the territory and creation of a directory;
- Information to the population with recommendations;
- Citizen application for reporting rare or endangered plants and photo contest.

Use land or gardens as pollinator gardens:

- Identification of the best pollinating plants;
- Information and donation of pollinator plants to the population.

Controlling terrestrial and aquatic invasive exotic species:

- Identification of invasive species in the MRC and on the territory of Morin-Heights;
- Action plan for the control of exotic and invasive species;
- Information on the importance of watercraft washing.


Limit backfill:

- Prohibition of landfill from another municipality;
- Information for citizens wishing to purchase backfill;
- Permit for backfill specifying the source of the backfill (inspection).





**Reduction of
noise, light,
olfactory and
air pollution,
etc.**



The strong growth of human activity on the territory of the municipality results in several types of pollution that negatively affect the quality of water and soil, fauna and flora and ultimately, the health of the inhabitants. We must minimize all kinds of pollution, whether visual, sound, olfactory, aerial, etc.

One of the priorities in the current environmental action is certainly the fight against climate change. Maintaining good air quality and reducing all air pollution is a challenge. The territory of Morin-Heights has little or no industrial sector, which makes it a very popular place where green and natural spaces are privileged.

Climate change is an important issue in our contemporary reality. It is caused by the increase in the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Closer to home, we can identify human activities resulting from the production and consumption of energy that cause the emission of greenhouse gases.

Reduction of noise, light, olfactory and air pollution, etc.

- Objectives

- 🎯 Draw up an action plan to fight against pollution (olfactory, dust, fumes, waste, etc.)
- 🎯 Reduce noise pollution
- 🎯 Reduce light pollution
- 🎯 Reduce air pollution and greenhouse gases
- 🎯 Protecting soil quality
- 🎯 Reduce residual materials



The following table presents the objectives and actions selected to reduce pollution of all kinds.

Draft an action plan to fight against pollution (olfactory, dust, fumes, waste):

- Municipal promotional posters;
- Information for the public and visitors.

Reduce noise pollution:

- Raising awareness among citizens about the noise regulation;
- Work with the MTQ to reduce speeding on routes 364 and 329 and to have route 329 bypass the village;
- Use of photo-radar, traffic lights and stops;
- Installation of speed detectors at strategic locations;
- Planting trees in the busiest areas to create a sound barrier and a more peaceful environment.

Reduce light pollution:

- Identification of light pollution sources;
- Regulation of soffit lighting in residences;
- Inspiration and promotion of the "Starry Sky" model;
- Development of a non-luminous privileged area for an astronomy site.



Reduce air pollution and greenhouse gases:

- Reduce the municipality's ecological footprint;
- Review of municipal employee routes;
- Supply of electric charging terminals in the municipality;
- Municipal incentives for the installation of home electric charging stations;
- Promotion of public transportation;
- Facilitation of electric transportation and incentive parking;
- Promotion of local consumption and enhancement of local commerce;
- Legislation for eco-energy and ecological constructions;
- Control of wood-burning fireplace for new constructions, according to the latest emission standards.

Protecting soil quality:

- Contaminated Sites Inventory;
- Sound management of the soils of these contaminated lands;
- Regulation and supervision of development work to reduce disturbance of the natural environment;
- Update of the pesticides and fertilizers control (prohibition) regulations;
- Reduction of the volume of sand and gravel used by the MTQ and the Public Works Department, by favoring the white road concept and by reducing the speed on expressways.

Reduce residual materials:

- Information campaign in partnership with the MRC;
- Reduction of single-use plastics: ban on plastic bags and bottles of less than 1 liter;
- Use of reusable or compostable tableware at municipal events;
- Establishment of initiatives to promote composting and recycling;
- Awareness on green waste collection (spring and fall);
- Research into the possibility of turning yard waste into compost for citizens;
- Organization of annual events (bazaar, garage sale) to encourage recycling;
- Development of the ecocenter by adding recycling (reconditioning) for materials in good condition (revalorization and reuse center).





**Maintenance
of an optimal
quality of life**

Since COVID-19, we have seen an increase in the number of newcomers who wish to benefit from a privileged environment in the countryside. The benefits of development are increasing municipal tax revenues and defraying the costs of services to citizens, as well as supporting local development. People are looking for quiet quality of life in natural areas where they can raise their families or retire.

However, it is imperative to minimize the negative effects of uncontrolled development that affects the quality of life sought in Morin-Heights.

Maintaining an optimal quality of life - Objectives

- 🎯 Continue the beautification of public spaces and private properties, by promoting natural landscaping
- 🎯 Maintain environmental quality consistent with high public health objectives
- 🎯 Protect public and private green and blue spaces
- 🎯 Promote the cohabitation of humans, domestic and wild animals
- 🎯 Arrange for the protection and migration of animals.



The following table presents the objectives and actions selected to achieve an optimal quality of life.

Continue efforts to beautify public spaces and private properties:

- Awareness of property beautification (contest);
- Identification and management of visual irritants "eyesores";
- Continued efforts for MH City in Bloom;
- Raising awareness and disseminating information on the best environmental practices.

Maintain environmental quality consistent with high public health objectives:

- Increase in the percentage of forest preservation and natural areas;
- Installation of stations on the aerobic corridor (fitness, restrooms);
- Protection of trails and network connections with Saint-Sauveur and Saint-Adolphe;
- Maintain access to hiking trails at all times;
- Implement a community garden and work with the elementary school to involve students in the design and execution of the garden;
- Identification and preservation of extraordinary landscapes and places;
- Posters on the territory promoting respect for nature.

Protect public and private green and blue spaces:

- Identification of the main natural sites of Morin-Heights;
- Joint action plan with concerned individuals and organizations;
- Maintain natural circulation links (cross-country skiing, crosswalk, bicycle path) through a right-of-way policy.



Promote the cohabitation of humans, domestic and wild animals:

- Ban on feeding wildlife;
- Addition of a fenced dog park.

Arrange for the protection and migration of animals:

- Geolocation map of places to protect;
- Identification of feasible corridors, in conjunction with the Town Planning and Environment Department;
- Planning and implementation of migration corridors;
- Protection of motorists and animals on Route 364.



Mechanisms for monitoring the policy and action plan

The Environmental Policy is a reference guide to help elected officials set priorities and make choices regarding sustainable development. This environmental policy, adopted by the Municipal Council, will be reviewed every five years to ensure that it meets changing needs and realities.

However, action plans will be developed annually to select priority objectives and actions that will be part of a dynamic and concrete process to meet current needs.

Communication mechanisms will be needed to inform citizens and involve them in environmental objectives and actions. We also recommend to the Municipal council to integrate the concept of social acceptability during important projects that could have a major impact on the quality of our environment.



Conclusion

Two years ago, the Environmental Advisory Committee wanted to be innovative in the transition of our community and to look for ways to ensure the protection of our environment. It wanted to influence and bring realistic and achievable proposals to Municipal Council. We did not know then, nor could we have foreseen, that our lives would undergo major changes. The pandemic, the demands of confinement, working from home, the deployment of high-speed internet, the race to buy homes in the country and the rapid growth of real estate development were going to change our Morinheighters reality considerably.

All attractive regions, even the most remote ones, have become coveted places, thus completely changing the paradigm of the local economy where the constant search for economic development must be adjusted and sometimes even replaced by that of resource conservation. The attractiveness of our region makes this work of preservation and "cohabitation" with the environment all the more important.

"In harmony with Nature", the slogan of Morin-Heights is confirmed by the results of the surveys held with the citizens as well as the organizations and associations in our municipality. The Environmental and Transition Policy that we are presenting is an expression of the desire of the population and the Municipal Council to put in place the means to perpetuate the fundamental and legitimate values of our small society.

We have a responsibility to clearly state our objectives and to act in accordance with them. Moreover, they must be expressed in the form of clear and achievable policies. We want to continue to live in harmony with nature and now is the time to coordinate and intensify our actions. We hope that this Environmental and Transition Policy will guide these efforts.





Members of the Environmental Advisory Committee

- Richard Cusson
- Serena Sayers
- Carole Paradis
- Jean-Pierre Dorais
- Gilles Saulnier
- Jennifer Durand

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