



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE BIOMASS CONVERSION CENTRE, a key project for renewing the Pontiac regional economy

Fort-Coulonge, September 10, 2015 – MRC Pontiac Warden, Raymond Durocher, proudly announced the launch of an innovative project that promises highly positive results both for the Pontiac economy and for the recovery of the local forest industry: the creation of a biomass conversion centre (BCC).

“The centre’s primary purpose will be to optimize our forest resources by transforming low-quality wood into high-value-added products for rapidly growing markets,” Mr. Durocher said. “There are numerous prospects, but among those with the greatest potential at this stage is biorefining for the production of commercial sugars.”

As in other Quebec regions, the Pontiac has chosen to take control of its own future and relaunch its economy with a flagship project. For the time being, the BCC project is similar in scale to other biorefining projects in Haute-Mauricie and Saguenay, but it also offers a great many additional possibilities over the long term.

Additionally, the MRC believes that the construction of the BCC will also help the region’s entire forest industry access better-quality wood and more substantial supply guarantees.

THE PROJECT IS TAKING SHAPE

For the last two (2) years, the MRC and its partners have been conducting studies to confirm the viability and possible benefits of the project, with the support of the Québec government’s *ministère de l’Économie, de l’Innovation et des Exportations* (MEIE) and *ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs* (MFFP). The results of these studies have convinced the MRC to continue its efforts, in particular to identify various technologies that could be integrated into the BCC project. Talks are under way with corporations that supply these technologies, and MRC representatives are planning to travel to Europe and the United States this fall to study the technologies in more detail, and discuss the prospects of bringing them to Pontiac.

At this stage, the MRC has met with the project’s stakeholders, including the Outaouais’ Beneficiaries of Supply Guarantees, the *Groupement forestier du Pontiac*, and the *Office des producteurs de bois du Pontiac*, to inform them about the nature of the project, its intentions and future steps.

The General Manager of the *Groupement Forestier du Pontiac*, Mr. Martin Boucher, says that, “the BCC project clearly shows the importance of taking a new look at the use of our forests and to diversify to allow businesses to become more competitive and ultimately ensure their sustainability.”

The Pontiac region's dependence on a single industry resulted in a major blow for the regional economy when the Smurfit-Stone pulp and paper mill closed in 2008. The Pontiac must find new economic development opportunities that take advantage of its natural resources and the skills of local workers, while also diversifying and innovating.

This project is consistent with the orientations of the *Cellule d'intervention forestière*, which the Government of Québec set up in June, and the Beauregard report, which focuses on the economic component of the Sustainable Forest Management Strategy. The *Cellule* is intended to promote the growth of the forest industry and assess the cost of fibre and supply in all regions of Quebec. The Beauregard report proposes value-based forestry development approaches that will ensure financial profitability for all stakeholders.

Philippe Fredette, Plant and Supply Manager at Stella-Jones Inc., expressed interest in the project's evolution. "In addition to allowing us to obtain better supply guarantees, the BCC may have a significant impact on the quality of logs and the cost of transportation."

Over the next few months, those in charge of the project will continue to conduct the necessary studies: among them, exploring additional prospects for the BCC such as cogeneration and extraction, and planning a fibre conversion centre. They will also work to select the BCC's operating technology and evaluate the six (6) potential partners.

At this stage of the project, the construction site, timeframe, and process for the BCC have not yet been decided. However, from now until completion, the MRC Pontiac is committed to keeping the population and stakeholders informed of any new developments in the project.

"I want to thank all of the partners who collaborated with the MRC in helping the project take shape, including the *Centre de recherche industrielle du Québec*, the *Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières*, the *ministère des Ressources naturelles*, the MEIE, the MFFP, and TransTechnika, to name a few," Raymond Durocher concluded.

ABOUT THE PONTIAC MRC

The MRC Pontiac is a large agricultural and forested region in southwestern Québec, in the heart of the province's deciduous and mixed forests. The MRC Pontiac is in charge of land use planning and the management of waste disposal, watercourses, forests, unorganized territories, and civil and fire safety. It also oversees the preparation of municipal assessment roles as well as economic and cultural development. The MRC Council of elected representatives consists of the mayors of the region's 18 municipalities, and is chaired by the warden, Mr. Raymond Durocher.

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