A NATIONAL PARK PROJECT IN TÉMISCAMINGUE COUNTY

Information Bulletin _{on the} OPÉ MICAN NATIONAL PARK PROJECT

LEANR THE FACTS

Territory under study Project time frame Benefits Users of the territory

Cliffs on Lake Témiscamingue photo: Isabelle Tessier















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A project to create a Québec national park in Témiscamingue is under study

MISSION

The fundamental mission of a national park is to ensure the conservation and enhancement of territories that are representative of Québec's 43 natural regions or exceptional sites, while making them accessible for educational or outdoor recreational purposes. In the case of the Parc national d'Opémican project, the goal is to preserve a representative sample of the landscape that characterizes the western portion of the natural region of the south Laurentian Mountains.

WHAT IS A NATIONAL PARK

A park is a testimony to nature evolving without any interventions other than those required for the development of educational and recreational activities

PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

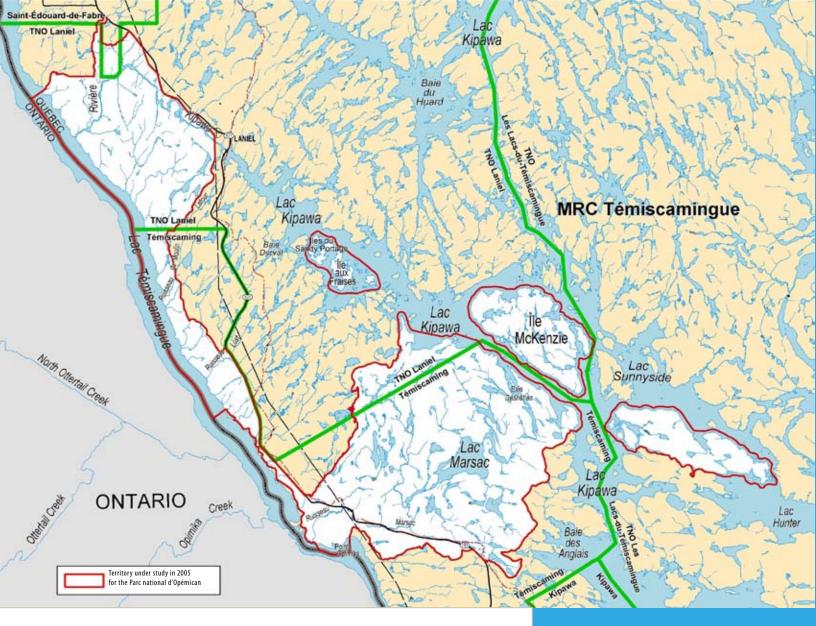
Hence, any type of commercial activity derived from natural resources, are prohibited by law (Loi sur les parcs) which governs the entire network of national parks. Hunting is also prohibited.

Various other activities can be practiced hiking, biking, nature study and interpretation, swimming, camping, canoeing, kayaking, fishing,

A park layout can include various facilities: discovery and service centres, campgrounds, cottages and sanctuaries, interpretation trails, etc.

We must encourage the Government, the promoter of this far-reaching project, to conduct the necessary studies and present to the people, a concrete project in respect of which we can express our opinions freely with a full knowledge of the case during the public hearings.

In 2005, following requests made by the Conférence régionale des élus de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue, the MRC de Témiscamingue, the Société de développement du Témiscamingue, the Town of Témiscaming and Corporation Opémican, and after consultations, the Services des parcs du ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs (MDDEP) defined the boundaries of a 304 km² territory to be examined for the creation of a Québec national park (Parc national) in Témiscamingue County.



Territory under study

The territory under study for the Parc national d'Opémican, which was defined in 2005, covers an area of 304 km^2 and is **mostly composed of public lands (Crown lands)**. It covers less than 2% of all the public lands within the Regional County Municipality (RCM) of Témiscamingue. Close to 93% of RCM territory (17,832 km²) is composed of public lands.

The territory under study involves the municipalities of Témiscaming, St-Édouard-de-Fabre, the unorganized territories of Laniel and Les-Lacs-du-Témiscamingue as well as territories of interest for the First Nations of Eagle Village, Wolf Lake and Timiskaming.

EXCLUDED

The following are excluded from the territory under study: cottages and private properties established along the shores of Lake Témiscamingue between the south shore of the Kipawa River and Opémican Point, the former railway track (snowmobile and ATV trail), and Highway 101. Owners who will have to travel on park roads to get to their cottages or homes will not have to pay access rights to the park. The same will apply to their guests.

IMPORTANT

The territory under study **IS NOT** a park boundary. The Government will propose a park boundary to the people only when it has concluded all its studies.

Protecting our natural resources

The creation of a park would allow for the preservation of our natural resources on a section of our territory. This project is consistent with our fundamental values related to sustainable development, respect and preservation of nature for present and future generations. Based on actual data, the territory under study includes the following:



A complete watershed, that of lac Marsac, which occupies close to 50% of the territory under study and connects two large lakes in the region, that is, Lake Kipawa and Lake Témiscamingue;

- More than 13 % of shoreline on the Québec side of Lake Témiscamingue (23 km) and 165 km of shoreline on Lake Kipawa, including the islands;
- A rich and diversified wildlife habitat, including an active heron nest in the area of Île aux Fraises;
- Nesting sites for the peregrine falcon, a vulnerable species, found on the cliffs of Lake Kipawa and Lake Témiscamingue;
- 433 species of plants, of which 10 are considered to be rare;
- Mature forests that are more than 100 years old.

THE PAST ON DISPLAY



The Opémican site was a relay centre for travellers in the 1880s. It became an important shipbuilding yard associated with log floating activities and was used to repair boomboats up until 1976. Declared a historic site in 1983, the site played an important role in the development and history of Témiscamingue.

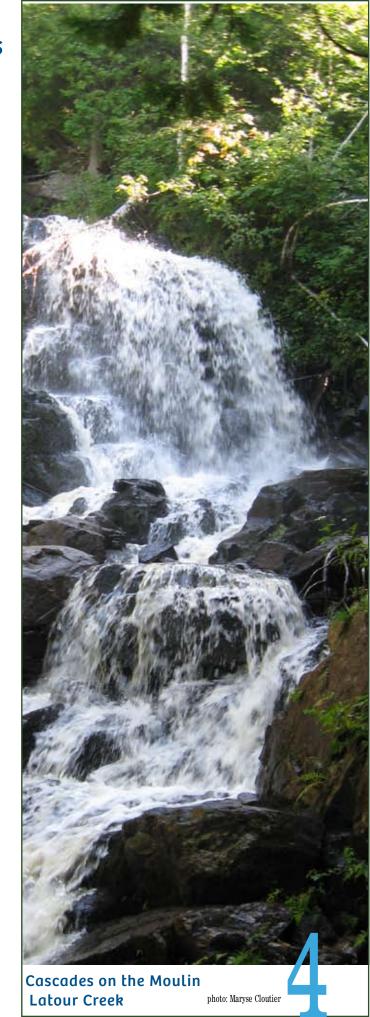
The national park would also provide an opportunity to elevate aboriginal culture in various ways and present it to visitors from all over the world.



Peregrine falcon a vulnerable species in Québec photo: Norman Dignard



Whithefringed-orchid, a plant with a precarious status photo: Maryse Cloutier



Major steps to be completed

In the spring of 2009, Parks Service began intensive work leading to a national park proposal. In the spirit of transparency, it also created a working group composed of regional representatives who are delegated to follow the evolution of the Parc national d'Opémican project. The members of this working group remain independent regarding future government recommendations and their goals include the following:



Foster exchanges with the community, collect, share and circulate information:

X Take note of the population's expectations, identify issues and the problematic related to the project;

Year Find solutions that are beneficial for everyone so the project will have the least negative impact possible. while also meeting government objectives in relation to the creation of a national park.

While the working group was being set up, the Service des parcs began writing the document entitled "Status Report" which outlines the characteristics of the territory under study. Here are the steps to be completed and the project's time frame.

THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS ARE INVITED TO SIT IN ON THE WORKING GROUP AS OBSERVERS OR MEMBERS:

Témiscamingue Regional County Municipality (RCM) Conseil régional de l'environnement de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue (CREAT) Conférence régionale des élus de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue (CRÉ) Association touristique régionale de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue (ATR) Eagle Village First Nations (EVFN) Timiskaming First Nations (TFN) Wolf Lake First Nations (WLFN) Town of Témiscaming Municipality of St-Édouard-de-Fabre Laniel Municipal Committee Société de développement du Témiscamingue (SDT) Local Development Centre (CLD) Société d'aide aux développements des collectivités (SADC) Corporation Opémican Service des parcs du ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs (MDDEP) Direction régionale du MDDEP

STEPS and TIME FRAME

1	STATUS REPORT Portrait of all the characteristics of the territory under study: wildlife, vegetation, geology, hydrography, archeology, use of the territory.	PENDING, DOCUMENT EXPECTED IN THE SPRING OF 2010
2	PROVISIONAL MASTER PLAN Proposition regarding park boundaries, zoning and design concept (trails, hospitality structure, camping, etc.)	WINTER 2011
3	INFORMATION SESSIONS 60 days before the public hearings, information sessions are presented to fully explain the project to citizens.	Spring 2011
4	PUBLIC HEARINGS Public hearings are a forum for citizens and groups who wish to present in writing or orally, their position or their suggestions to enrich the proposition.	Summer 2011
5	FINAL MASTER PLAN From comments received during the hearings, a final proposition will be prepared and then submitted to the council of ministers who will make a final decision on the park creation.	WINTER 2012
6	POSSIBLE CREATION OF A PARK If the park project is upheld, preliminary construction work will begin, staff will be progressively hired and a promotional campaign will get underway.	IN 2012
7	OFFICIAL OPENING The new employees will have been trained beforehand.	2014

Determining economic benefits

Tourism has always been an important activity in Témiscamingue. A traffic builder of an international scale such as a national park, will give rise to considerable increase in tourism goodwill, which in turn, will lead to the creation of new business opportunities, prolong the tourist season, and even better, consolidate our commercial services in close proximity. Without a major traffic builder, tourism goodwill and new investments will remain at a standstill in this area.



Presently, our traffic builder is the Fort-Témiscamingue National Historic Site of Canada which attracts more than 8,000 visitors per year. The Parc national d'Opémican could attract 40,000 visitors.

Québec's national parks attract a large number of visitors. The Parc national d'Opémican will be an attraction in itself, and all the commercial and service businesses will bear the rewards whether they are campgrounds, motels, lodges, restaurants, snack bars, corner stores, grocery stores, boutiques, service stations or existing tourist attractions. Everywhere across Québec, surrounding businesses have seen their sales figures increase when a new national park was created.

Thus, for every dollar spent in a park, \$15 are disbursed in the outlying area, mainly in the lodging and restaurant industries.

NUMBERS OF VISITORS

Québec's national parks network currently includes 23 parks. In 2006-2007, 3,649,756 persons visited Québec's national parks, which generated economic benefits amounting to \$600-million.

It is realistic to estimate that the Parc national d'Opémican could reach an annual attendance of 40,000 visitors. Regional economic benefits associated with this attendance could be around \$7.5-million annually. The MRC's

strategic location on the boundary with Ontario and its proximity to Highway 101, are other important assets. A national park in Témiscamingue would easily become part of the existing network of parks used by a growing number of people (Parc national d'Aiguebelle in Abitibi and Algonquin Park in Ontario).

JOBS CREATED

We can expect 35 jobs to be created in the park which would contribute to maintaining and creating another 125 jobs outside the park. In regard to park operating activities, the manpower is hired predominantly in the local community and include various jobs: management, administration, conservation and education, park warden, patrol officer for nautical and camping activities, labourer, agents responsible for welcoming, boutique, rental, maintenance, etc.

In an area rich in natural resources such as Témiscamingue County and where the economy is based mostly on forestry, the establishment of a national park will be instrumental in diversifying the economy. It will create a wide range of jobs that appeal in part to youth, and automatically contribute to preventing the out-migration of young people to larger centres.

In addition, local and regional businesses will be invited through tendering, to take part in the development of the national park for landscaping and construction projects. Hence, starting in the first year, the national park could generate major economic benefits for the region, and create many jobs.

BENEFITS

Numbers of visitors: 40,000 visitors per year

Numbers of jobs: 35 jobs in the park 125 indirects jobs

Economic benefits: \$ 7.5-million annually

For every dollar spent in the park, \$ 15 will be spent in the outlying area.

What would happen to users of the territory if a park was created ?

LEASEHOLDERS FOR TEMPORARY FOREST SHELTERS OR VACATIONING PURPOSES

Within the territory under study, there are 39 leases issued for the construction of temporary shelters, compared to a total of 1,599 leases in Témiscamingue County, and 13 leases issued for vacationing purposes, compared to a total of 80 in Témiscamingue County. Many options are contemplated for leaseholders of temporary forest shelters or vacationing purposes within park boundaries:



X The Government could purchase the facilities by mutual agreement.

- X The building and leased land could be excluded from park boundaries. We should emphasize that leaseholders who choose this option could have access to the park at no charge to get to their cottage. This would also apply to their guests. They could also sell their facilities to the Government in the following years after the park creation.
- X The Government could purchase the facilities, and when possible, offer a new lot outside park boundaries in conjunction with the ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune.

SNOWMOBILE AND ATV



These activities are prohibited within a national park. In the case of Opémican, the former railway track will be excluded from the park. Hence, there will be no changes.

FISHING



Sport fishing is permitted within the park provided one pays a fishing fee. However, the creation of a national park will not change, in any way, how sport fishing is practiced on Lake Témiscamingue and Lake Kipawa. As a result, no special rate will be applied to areas in these two lakes that could become part of the national park.

Hydroelectric projects

The potential Parc national d'Opémican will have no influence on the undertaking of neither hydroelectric projects currently under study in the county.

EXCLUDED

It should be noted that the territory under study excluds:

cottages and private properties established along the shores of Lake Témiscamingue between the south shore of the Kipawa River and Opémican Point, the former railway track (snowmobile and ATV trail) and Highway 101. Owners of cottages or priuate properties, located in the area mentioned above, will have access to their cottages or homes at no charge.

ACCESS RATES

	PER DAY	ANNUAL PASS
Adult	\$3.50	\$16.50
FAMILY	\$7.00	\$35.00
SCHOOL GROUP	FREE	FREE



A NATIONAL PARK IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THAT WILL HAVE POSITIVE BENEFITS FOR THE TOTAL POPULATION OF TÉMISCAMINGUE

WE MUST TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS PROMISING PROJECT TO DIVERSIFY OUR ECONOMY WHILE CONTINUING TO WORK TOWARDS REVITALIZING OUR MAJOR INDUSTRIES.

> Opémican historic site photo: Maryse Cloutier

We must think about it seriously !

In this age of world demand for ecotourism and the creation of protected areas, the creation of a national park in Témiscamingue is a promising project for our youth and the entire community. It would also be instrumental in enhancing the aboriginal culture and the history that typifies this magnificent territory. The notoriety of national parks is well established and they have a great power of attraction among foreign visitors.

In each and every development project, there are advantages and inconveniences. The role

of the working group, set up by Parks Service, is to **maximize the advantages and minimize the inconveniences related to this project**.

Presently, the economic situation in Témiscamingue County is unsettled. With the population decreasing year after year, we must maintain and create jobs to increase our power of retention and attraction. Both our resource-based industries are in a crisis situation. We must continue our efforts to revitalize these industries, but we must also diversify. We must encourage the Government, the promoter of this far-reaching project, to conduct the necessary studies and present to the people, a concrete project in respect of which we can express our opinions freely with a full knowledge of the case during public hearings.

COUNTY

We often ask the government to take action to develop, or at least, stabilize Témiscamingue's economy. The government will be proposing a plan of action through the ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs.

For information, contact

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