

## Boucherville residents urged to dump garden, orchard produce

The provincial Agriculture Department is urging Boucherville residents not to eat produce from their gardens or orchards.

Guy Jacob, deputy agriculture minister in charge of regional affairs, told more than 300 residents Monday night that the produce should be dumped for precautionary reasons.

Jacob was one of several municipal and provincial officials invited to an information meeting called by Boucherville Mayor Hughes Aubertin.

Residents jammed the Mortagne High School auditorium to hear how their region

has fared in the wake of last month's toxic fire in nearby St. Basile le Grand. Poisonous furans and dioxins created by the burning of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) forced 3,500 area residents to leave their homes for nearly three weeks.

Even though no Boucherville residents were asked to leave their homes, the city was included in what provincial Environment Department officials referred to as the "disaster zone."

Although no dangerous levels of toxic residues were found in fruits and vegetables in Boucherville, Jacob said his depart-

ment issued the advisory "as an added precaution."

Raymond Perrier, who is heading the St. Basile cleanup for the Quebec Environment Department, offered to dispose of concerned residents' garden produce at no charge.

"We believe the products aren't dangerous, but as a service, we will pick up fruits and vegetables and take them away," Perrier said.

Dr. Alain Poirier, from Charles Le Moine Hospital in Greenfield Park, confirmed there is "no health risk for anyone" who

eats garden produce from Boucherville.

Poirier said heavy cigarette smoking poses a much greater health risk than eating those fruits and vegetables.

Jacob said that all domestic and commercial crops in the evacuated area will be destroyed, "not because we think they are dangerous but to assure our Quebec, Ontario and American customers that none of the products will go to market."

He said the majority of affected farmers support the government's decision because it maintains the credibility of farmers and their reputation as quality food producers.

In a written statement issued by Agriculture Minister Michel Pagé on Friday and distributed at Monday night's meeting, residents were informed that two agronomists are available between 8:30 a.m. and 9 p.m. seven days a week at the St. Bruno agricultural information bureau to answer questions. They can be reached by calling 653-8061.

Those interested in Environment Quebec's free disposal service for home-grown fruits and vegetables should call 1-800-363-9134.

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## Quebec will pay for plan to clear St. Amable tires

By PETER KUITENBROUWER  
of The Gazette

Environment Quebec is moving quickly to fund one or more projects to rid St. Amable of 3 million discarded tires, environmental official Michel Turgeon said this week.

Turgeon said the department will meet with "six or eight" entrepreneurs in the next two weeks. Each is seeking provincial assistance for its project to recycle the tires.

Residents of the South Shore community fear the tires could catch fire, forcing an evacuation similar to the St. Basile le Grand PCB fire last month.

Turgeon, in charge of tire recycling in the department's recuperation division, discounted last week's reports that Animat, a St. Elie d'Orford company in the Eastern Townships, has purchased the tires.

Animat wants to shred the tires to make carpets, but won't try to acquire the tires unless it receives provincial assistance, Turgeon said.

Turgeon also said a report in *La Presse* that there are 20 million tires in St. Amable is just guesswork.

### 'Danger of a fire'

The 3 million figure is based on estimates by the engineering firm SNC, he said.

"It's still an imposing pile of tires. There's still a big danger for a fire in St. Amable."

Turgeon said the Environment Department is collecting information on fires at tire heaps in the United States, to know what to do if the St. Amable pile starts to burn.

"In the U.S., there are hundreds of depots like St. Amable," he said. "They've had lots of fires in their dumps."

Tire fires are very hard to put out

if they are not extinguished right away, Turgeon said.

Pouring water on the flames is dangerous because then water contaminated with oil from the burning tires could filter into the ground, he said.

Turgeon said the U.S. does not know what to do with 2 billion discarded tires. About 240 million tires are discarded there every year.

Among industrialized countries, only West Germany and Japan have solved the tire problem: by burning the tires in cement-factory furnaces. Most Canadian furnaces can only burn shredded tires and the shredding process is not cost-efficient, he said.

### Flooded with offers

Jean-Paul Mireault, who owns the St. Amable tire dump, said he's been flooded with offers for the tires since news media began publicizing the pile after the PCB disaster.

Caoutchouc Québec already buys about 30,000 tires a year from the pile to make muffler brackets, said its president, André Bergeron.

But with two tractor trailers a week arriving at the dump from New York, loaded with tires for dumping, the purchases of tires still don't diminish the heap.

This week, Tim Ramatally, the president of a Trinidad company which imports 100,000 tires to the Caribbean island each year to be retreaded for domestic use, expressed interest in the heap while on a visit to Canada.

He called Mireault to discuss discarded tire prices.

"Nothing is wrong with the structure of these tires," Ramatally said.

There is an economic slump in Trinidad and many on the island prefer to buy used tires instead of new ones, he said.

## Hydro-Québec denies Laprairie slated to become 'PCB capital'

Hydro-Québec has amassed discarded PCBs at a storage facility in Laprairie, a Hydro spokesman said this week, but he dismissed a report that the utility will make the town the South Shore's "PCB capital."

Louis-Philippe Roy said Hydro-Québec has about 60 containers filled with 1,200 PCB condensers, "some" barrels of solids laced with the toxic chemical, and one reservoir of PCB-contaminated soil at the La Citrière storage site on Lafrenière Blvd. in Laprairie.

Hydro-Québec considers La Citrière safe because it is far from surrounding towns, Roy said.

Since the St. Basile le Grand fire Aug. 23, Hydro-Québec has sent out a memo "to warn PCB storage site managers of the importance of security," Roy said.

The 1,200 condensers are a small percentage of the 20,000 Hydro-Québec has in storage, he said.

Denis Parent, a Laprairie fireman, said he and his colleagues have not been trained to fight a PCB blaze.



Gazette, Peter Andrews

Judy Daniel (middle) signs protest petition while Claire Millette (left) and Bonnie Kerr look on during train's final run.

## Train is history - after 140 years

By MIKE KING  
of The Gazette

The Montreal-St. Hilaire commuter train rode into the history books Friday as it ended 106 years of service to South Shore residents.

Private eulogies and a memorial wreath marked the last run, which left Central Station in Montreal at 5:10 p.m.

David Johnson, president of the Canadian Railroad Historical Association, noted before the final run that the train to St. Hilaire began as a passenger service 140 years ago. He said it became a commuter line in 1882, making it one of the oldest in the country.

Transport 2000 Quebec, the public-transit lobby group, plans to hold a post-mortem on the train's demise next week, president Guy Chartrand told *The Gazette*.

Chartrand said the Comité de survie du train de St. Hilaire, a commu-

ter group, will be invited to the meeting to discuss what can be done to bring back commuter train service to the South Shore.

A last-ditch attempt to save the commuter service failed last week when mayors of the 10-community Richelieu Valley transport committee couldn't agree to raise enough money to keep the train on track for 10 more months.

### Couldn't agree

Transport Minister Marc-Yvan Côté offered in August to keep the commuter train operating until June 1989 if the Richelieu Valley transport committee contributed \$225,000 — one quarter of the line's \$900,000 deficit — while further feasibility studies could be made.

But the 10 Richelieu Valley mayors couldn't even agree on raising the \$100,000 that committee president Julien Bussière wanted to offer Côté as a sign they supported

the train.

Bussière, who is mayor of Beauceville, was confronted by about 50 angry commuters at the committee meeting demanding that everything possible be done to keep the train running.

He responded by saying all 10 mayors had to agree on contributing toward the \$100,000 or \$225,000.

Bussière explained that the participating municipalities have shared transit-system costs in the valley since the committee was formed. Since the commuter train was never part of that system, however, only a unanimous vote could be accepted.

Municipal leaders from St. Hyacinthe, St. Thomas d'Aquin, Ste. Marie Madeleine and Ste. Madeleine refused to contribute toward the fund, claiming the train no longer benefits their residents.

St. Hyacinthe Mayor Clément Rhéaume said "nobody takes the train" in his community anymore.

It wasn't enough that the remaining municipalities — St. Hilaire, Beauceville, Otterburn Park, McMasterville, St. Basile and St. Bruno — were prepared to spend more money to ensure commuter service for their constituents.

### Study promised

Bussière and other committee members left last Thursday's meeting with Côté empty-handed when the minister said he had no choice but to close the commuter line.

"In view of the fact we didn't inject any money... the train will just be abandoned," Bussière said after the one-hour meeting with Côté.

The minister did promise an independent study to determine whether the Métro or commuter trains will serve the South Shore in future years. Côté estimated the study will take six months to complete and that

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## St. Hubert air-show pilot project proves a soaring success



Valérie Constantineau, 3, mother, Martine (right), Roxanne Dion, Serge Daneau at show.

St. Hubert has landed the honor of being the annual host site of the Montreal International Air Show as a result of successfully staging the event for the first time last week.

Wings of Hope, organizers of the event for the past four years, moved the show to the South Shore this year after management at Mirabel airport couldn't guarantee dates and times.

### 'It went great'

Pierre Thérault, Wings of Hope president, said in an interview that Mirabel and St. Hubert are the only two airports in the province capable of accommodating the air show.

Although attendance at Expo Air 88 — the name given to the 10th annual Montreal International Air Show by Wings of Hope — was down considerably from the record set last year, the show was still deemed successful.

"It went great!" said show director François Chénier. "It was a success its first time on the South Shore."

Chénier, who is also Wings of

Hope vice-president, said St. Hubert was "unknown territory for us."

"We had to start from scratch and make ourselves known," he said.

It is estimated that between 50,000 and 100,000 spectators gathered on or around the air show site Saturday and Sunday to watch aerobatic displays by such crowd favorites as the Canadian Forces' precision flying team, the Snowbirds.

There were also numerous ground displays of aircraft.

Wings of Hope volunteers are still counting gate receipts but Chénier expects the event raised as much as \$200,000 before expenses.

All profits will go to Wings of Hope, which flies supply and rescue missions in western South America.

St. Hubert Mayor Guy Desgrosseillers has invited Wings of Hope to return next year to stage the 11th annual Montreal International Air Show.

"We would be proud to have

them back," Desgrosseillers said yesterday.

The mayor agreed with Chénier that at least \$400,000 worth of economic activity was generated in St. Hubert by the two-day air show.

"It makes our town known and we want them (Wings of Hope) to return next year," Desgrosseillers added.

"They want us in St. Hubert; we'll be there," Chénier said.

### To raise funds

He said work has already begun on Expo Air 89 with plans to double the number of planes.

"We can get 50 planes on that tarmac," Chénier said.

Wings of Hope took over operations of the international air show from Transport Canada in 1985 when the event became the non-profit organization's main fundraiser.

Last year, the Mirabel show finished a close second to Abbotsford, B.C., in attendance.

The British Columbia air show is Canada's largest.

— Mike King