

September 1st, 2005
St-Constant, Quebec

William J. Cosgrove
President, BAPE
Troncon Jean-Leman of Aut. 30

Dear Sir,

Since I may not have the time or the opportunity to address your commission for the proposed highway project, I thought it better to put my thoughts to paper, as a submission for your esteemed consideration.

We moved to St-Constant eight years ago, and are extremely happy with the general peacefulness of this community. There is everything we could want for ourselves and our children in this vibrant and diverse grouping of cities and towns commonly called "the south shore". The only drawback that has a noticeable effect on the lives of the people of St-Constant / Ste.Catherine / Delson / Candiac is the endless congestion of Highway 132 which bisects this urban area. It should be noted that this stretch of road is also extremely dangerous for motorists and especially pedestrians, as well as noisy, dirty, dusty, and choked with the exhaust of cars and trucks stopping and starting through seven kilometres of red lights and bumper-to-bumper traffic. And this goes on for ten to twelve hours a day, seven days a week, twelve months of the year.

This having been said, it was with some degree of stupefaction that I received the announcement of the last BAPE to study this affair, which recommended constructing a multi-lane autoroute through farmland to the south of these communities, with no access whatsoever for local residents. Given that the "Troncon Jean-Leman" is an extension of this already flawed logic, I must voice my extreme opposition to its construction. The following are just a few of the reasons why this piece of highway should **NOT** be built.

1. The area in which the Troncon Jean-Leman is supposed to be built is a beautiful piece of land, and vital to the quality of the local environment. The forests, the wetlands, and the undisturbed aspect of this area are all things which are harder and harder to find this close to urban development. Many people view such treasures as raw material to be exploited, paved, and built upon not realizing that the real treasure is in just leaving it alone. Bricks and cement and asphalt do not filter our groundwater, nor purify the air we breathe, nor provide sanctuary to the thousands of creatures great and small which make up what we call biodiversity. There are deer that walk through those woods. There are frogs and salamanders and snakes in those wetlands. Even the skunks and the raccoons and the porcupines need places such as this to live and raise their families. Who are we to say that **all of it belongs to us**, to do with as **we see fit**, and **to hell** with the consequences for everything that lived there before we came along. I realize that a

certain amount of land is required for justifiable use by humans, but we also have an obligation to cooperate with nature. For too long have we wantonly exploited nature for the sake of money, or progress, or worst of all, simply for convenience. The time has come to say **NO** when a project will destroy another corner of habitat strictly for the greed or convenience of a few short-sighted developers or politicians. Where there are solutions which provide for the needs of humans while preserving the natural environment which surrounds us, then we must do the right thing. We must compromise, and leave nature be.

2. Now that we have decided to protect the environment, what would be a viable option? For more than thirty years the land has been expropriated along Highway 132 for an eventual multi-lane autoroute. The zoning, development, and infrastructure planning of four towns have been based on the known location of this all-important highway. All of the merchants who set up a business, or individuals who bought a house along the 132 did so **knowing**, and even hoping that someday there would be a highway at their front door (and don't let any of them tell you otherwise). The Aut. 30 plan already drawn up by the MTQ for the axis of the 132 was designed to provide for smooth traffic flow from all four towns, greatly reduced pollution, greatly reduced noise, as well as safe access for pedestrians and cyclists among the various communities. **This is a win-win situation.** The humans improve those things which matter to them, and the natural environments of the forest and wetland remain undisturbed.

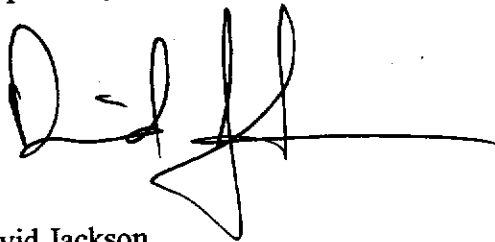
3. If the Troncon Jean-Leman is approved, thereby clearing the way for Autoroute 30 to be built across the south of St-Constant, what impact does this have? First of all, it will destroy a small triangle of wilderness habitat of which we have so little left in southern Quebec. "So what" some people might say. The highway is more important than a small patch of forest and a swamp. The next step will be to build the highway through the farmland south of the city, taking away a lot of very good agricultural land. "So what" they say again. They only use it to grow hay or corn for their animals. The highway is more important than a few hundred acres of farmland. So we build the highway across the fields and as close as possible to the houses on the south side of town because the first BAPE said that this would help. "So what" if it creates a lot of pollution, dust, litter, and unbearable noise in a neighbourhood that was once so peaceful. This is progress, and the highway is more important than the quality of life of a few thousand people. And the 132 remains the polluted, congested, dangerous nightmare of a road that nobody has bothered to fix for the last thirty years, or probably will for another twenty. "So what" say the greedy merchants. Building an autoroute on the 132 might put some of them out of business, or make the traffic problems even worse during construction. It is far better to create a second zone of pollution and noise where none existed before, destroy the quality of life of thousands of people, leave the "death trap" 132 the way it is, and do irreparable damage to the environment. But seriously, **this is a lose-lose situation.** The residents of the four surrounding communities get nothing out of this, since we already know that taking a few trucks off the 132 is not going to have a dramatic impact on the congestion. The 132 will still be a dangerous, noisy, and smelly scar cutting through our neighbourhoods. The farmland will be lost forever, and we have precious little left in southern Quebec, as we continue to cover thousands of acres of it with housing

developments, shopping centres, and asphalt every single year. **Somewhere this has to stop.** Most of all, the environment loses. The few remaining tracts of forest need our protection and they need it now. We cannot keep cutting down the trees, filling in the swamps, and chasing away all the animals, and still expect the planet to filter out all our pollution for us. We have eyes, and we have brains, and we can understand what our "progress" is bringing in the coming years if we do not start to change our evil ways. In the words of Harry Truman, **"If not us, then who ...If not now, ...when"**.

In conclusion, let me say that the amount of money that one side or the other might quote as being the "cost" of the project does not really tell the bigger picture. When we start sacrificing the last remaining bits of forest and farmland for the sake of a more convenient place to put a highway, then we are on slippery ground indeed. These seemingly insignificant pieces of mother nature may not be worth a lot to some people today, but neither is it something that is within our power to create after it has been destroyed. When they're gone, they're gone ... forever. End of story. No more birds, no more frogs, no more deer, and no more life. Concrete and asphalt do not sing, chirp, fly, flutter, or croak. Since the axis of the existing 132 can already be considered as a dead zone in terms of biodiversity, then it would be no great sacrifice to put a little more pavement and concrete over it to suit the changing needs of humanity. This would be an ultimately wiser decision.

Thank you in advance for giving every possible weight of consideration to the arguments which have here been put forward.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Jackson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

David Jackson