



News release

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Citizens' Summit on the future of Deux-Montagnes coming up June 1 and 2

Deux-Montagnes, February 11, 2010 – A Citizens' Summit on the future of Ville de Deux-Montagnes will be held on June 1 and 2, announced Mayor Marc Lauzon at today's town council meeting. These meetings will give citizens an opportunity to scrutinize the City's finances, including its sources of income and its expenditures, in order to come up with a strategy to deal with the increased costs of public services and, in turn, to lessen the impact on property taxes. The exercise will also help determine a course of action to create new sources of income.

“We have been saying for four years that Deux-Montagnes is facing a difficult financial situation and that we have to take steps to diversify our sources of income and create more collective wealth, said Mr. Lauzon. However, it is clear that an exchange of ideas with citizens is essential to find ways to ensure the City's future. The Citizens' Summit will help everyone gain a better understanding of the actual situation and to come up with a shared vision of Deux-Montagnes' future.”

It was when 700 people signed the public registers requesting a referendum on the projects to renovate Moir Park and to convert the polyvalente Deux-Montagnes auditorium into a true entertainment venue that the city administration realized citizens still knew too little about the City's fiscal reality. It thus became necessary to get citizens involved in developing a successful strategy.

The Citizens' Summit will be held at the Olympia. The area will be divided into workshops to foster a more productive work environment. “We will offer one session in French and one in English, so that all Deux-Montagnes citizens can attend meetings in the language of their choice. Of course, people can also take part in both meetings if they wish,” said the mayor.



A detailed analysis of the budget will precede the Citizens' Summit on the future of Deux-Montagnes

Two evenings dedicated to financial analysis
will be held on May 19 and 20, 2010.

(Deux-Montagnes, May 11, 2010) – The municipality is organizing workshops for the purpose of maximizing the impact of the city's Citizens' Summit as well as reviewing all expenses and investments included in the 2010 budget. These workshops will take place over two consecutive nights, May 19 and 20, 2010, at 7 p.m., at the municipal council chamber. All citizens are invited. Citizens in attendance will be able to better understand the condition of their City's health and will be able to ask any questions pertaining to public funds and how the money is used.

"In order to better understand why the forthcoming Citizens' Summit is a key issue for the future of Deux-Montagnes, on a tax level as much as that of services offered, citizens have to recognize the real state of the City's finances and understand where their tax money is being spent," explains Mr. Marc Lauzon, mayor of Deux-Montagnes. "The two pre-summit days will enable us to fully discuss the problem so that citizens can understand that the City is in a crisis for very good reasons."

The mayor adds that these workshops may seem tedious to some, but they are vital to understand the financing deadlock the municipality is presently facing. The budget analysis will be led by Nicolas Bouchard, executive director for the City, and all service directors will be on hand to account for costs generated by their services. All councillors have been invited to attend and may ask any relevant questions pertaining to these services.

Last minute arrangements for the Citizens' Summit

With a view to ensuring the success of these encounters at the Olympia, on June 1st (in French) and June 2nd (in English), the City will broadcast, on its Web site at www.ville.deux-montagnes.qc.ca, the content of items to be discussed throughout the eight workshops set up within the framework of this great Citizens' Summit.

The issues will enable citizens to choose which workshop they would like to take part in. These eight workshops will deal with community programs, safety (police and firefighting services, as

well as traffic management), sports and recreation activities, culture (library and cultural activities), economic development (Oka Road, commercial, residential and industrial development as well as renovation), public works (snow removal, garbage collection and large infrastructure projects), the environment (including sanitation and services to citizens) and finance (revenues, expenses and debt).

In light of this information, citizens will be able to offer comments on subjects pertaining to workshops other than the ones in which they are participating. Citizens will be invited to deposit their comments in a box provided for that purpose at the entrance of the Olympia.

Workshops with clear goals

Discussion leaders, who are, for the most part, citizens of Deux-Montagnes with good knowledge of the subjects under study and major involvement in community affairs, will be on hand to draw out participants. Together all will be seeking possible solutions to be implemented in an effort to enable the City to meet the ongoing decrease in revenues due to the lack of urban development on the territory and possibly provide ways of meeting the continuing expenditures related to aging infrastructures and the exponential increase of public services (garbage removal, recycling, police and firefighting services, public transit, etc.).

Mr. Lauzon summarizes by saying: "What is at stake here is very clear; we either keep the status quo and change nothing in our management approach and, inevitably, prepare for large tax increases in the future, or we sacrifice some of our services now and make cuts in areas which will affect our quality of life but, at the same time, will slow down the rise in taxes or we look for ways to increase our revenues."

The municipality has placed Ms. Julie Boivin in charge of organizing the Citizens' Summit. Ms. Boivin is a geographer by profession and has experience in this kind of forum, having recently organized such events for other municipalities. She will also be in charge of drafting the event's final report.

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The future of Deux-Montagnes is being decided now!

(Deux-Montagnes, Tuesday, May 25, 2010) – After holding the pre-Citizens’ Summit last Wednesday and Thursday, the City of Deux-Montagnes is now looking to the citizens’ public consultation which will take place on **Tuesday and Wednesday, June 1st and 2nd**, from 7 p.m. each night. **This Citizens’ Summit on the future of Deux-Montagnes** will have a major impact on property taxes, municipal programs and the City’s role as a whole over the next decades.

The municipal affairs administration hopes that hundreds of citizens will gather each night at the Olympia to take part in this summit. We know that the first night will be hosted in French and the second night in English but citizens are more than welcome to attend both of these proceedings.

“This is probably the most important meeting over the course of our municipality’s history. Our city is 90 years old,” says Mayor Marc Lauzon. “This is a non-partisan meeting. Citizens will have their say. The stakes are high and decisions to be made are urgently required. We must decide together what we would like to do.”

The situation in Deux-Montagnes is very unique amongst municipalities on the North Shore of Montreal: we have practically arrived at the end of our urban development and our revenues rest almost entirely on the shoulders of residential owners, mostly middle-class people. We cannot not rely on an industrial park or retail industry for support. The condition of our infrastructures, mirroring those of other cities which underwent an intense development more than 50 years ago, requires major investments while the cost of public and intermunicipal services is exploding.

Eight workshops will be on the agenda during the Citizens’ Summit: culture, sports and recreation, community programs, economic development, finance, public works and safety. Citizens will have to choose which one of these workshops they would like to take part in.

The event is coordinated by Julie Boivin, a geographer with sound experience in this type of citizens’ event.

Additional information

During the pre-Citizens' Summit, last week, in a businesslike atmosphere, a lot of information was supplied to citizens present. Municipal service directors took turns introducing the work performed by their employees and compared their staff with that of the Greater Montreal Metropolitan communities of similar size. In addition, Nicolas Bouchard, executive director, analyzed in detail the budget of each of these services. He also answered several pertinent questions put forward by people in attendance.

Deux-Montagnes calls Citizens' Summit on its future

What happens when a Montreal area bedroom suburb comes to the end of its urban development?

(Deux-Montagnes, May 17, 2010) – This week, the City of Deux-Montagnes will set the stage for its Citizens' Summit proceedings which are scheduled for the first days of June. Over two consecutive evenings on Wednesday and Thursday, May 19 and 20, the City will conduct a rigorous review of its budget in the Council hall.¹ For the occasion, all municipal department managers will take turns explaining to citizens all the details pertaining to expenses encompassed by their departments' responsibility. Nicolas Bouchard, the City manager, will lead the meetings. Every citizen will have the opportunity to ask questions.

Marc Lauzon, the City's mayor since 2005 explains that “the objective of these pre-summit meetings is to finalize debate on the City's financial position. Regardless of how many times we have repeated that our financial position is precarious, that we have already made all the cuts possible, that infrastructure expenses and contributions to the various intermunicipal programs are skyrocketing, citizens do not seem to realize that we have to change our strategy, right now, if they want to continue benefiting from the same services to which they are accustomed and continue receiving manageable tax increases.”

For a long time, Deux-Montagnes relied on new residential construction to absorb the annual increase of service costs. As is the case with many other cities, our city neglected to ensure the continuity of many infrastructure systems (sewer systems, aqueduct services, etc.). Historically, our City has always wanted to remain a bedroom suburb, without any industrial park or sector and, without any significant retail sector. And because they sold more rapidly, properties for first time buyers spearheaded our urban development which is now, almost at its limit. It is therefore almost the exclusive responsibility of homeowners (who often have modest incomes), to assume the entire cost of public services.

The present municipal administration established a new wealth strategy and began its new approach at the beginning of 2010. However, citizens were opposed to the idea of investing in some local sites which would have provided the city with a new tourist and recreational, as well as cultural, personality and would have helped generate new businesses and consequently new economic spin-offs.

The Citizens' Summit was called within the context of this present situation and will take place on June 1 and 2, 2010, at the Olympia² (an arena which doubles as a theater in the spring). The summit will be held in French on the first day and in English on the second day, because, of its 17,700 citizens, (almost 20%) use English as their mother tongue.

Citizens are invited to participate in one of eight workshops: finance, economic development, safety, environment, public works, sports and recreation activities, culture and community programs. They will be able to discuss priorities as well as changes they would like to see happen.

The mayor, who will not take center stage, adds: “everyone can share their vision of the future of our City during this summit: we may choose to change nothing and accept an inevitable increase of taxes in order to maintain the quality of life we are accustomed to and uphold the present services or we can cut deeper into our services and human resources or even consider an amalgamation with an adjoining city, which is less dependent on property taxes. I also hope that some citizens will bring new suggestions to the table which will help us preserve what we have achieved and eventually bring a new wind of economic life to Deux-Montagnes.”

Additional information pertaining to the Citizens’ Summit is available at: www.ville.deux-montagnes.qc.ca

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¹The municipal hall is located at 803 Oka Road, Deux-Montagnes

²The Olympia is located at 611, 20th Avenue (Deux-Montagnes), near the junction of boulevard des Promenades and exit 8 of Highway 640.



Very successful participation at the Deux Montagnes Citizens' Summit

Deux-Montagnes, June 3, 2010 – There was a large crowd at the Citizens' Summit on the future of Deux Montagnes June 1st and 2nd at the Olympia, with 600 citizens taking an active part. The event took place in a business-like manner and a completely non-partisan atmosphere.

"I was highly impressed by the calm nature of people's discussions, centered solely around contributing to the well-being of their municipality," noted Julie Boivin, the event coordinator. "Furthermore, I was astonished to observe representation from all age groups among the population, a dimension which increases the value of this Summit."

All Deux-Montagne residents were spread out among eight working groups; most of them put forward concrete solutions – among these several very original ones – in direct connection with the themes being discussed: finance, economic development, infrastructures, safety, environment, culture, sport and leisure and community programs.

Each evening, the meeting opened with a scenario of the situation presented by the municipal Director General, Nicolas Bouchard. With supporting graphics, he outlined the development of the municipality from the installation of a mill on the banks of the Mille Îles River in 1800. He reviewed the period when Deux-Montagnes was particularly sought after by vacationers before taking more time on the demographic expansion phase, begun in the 1970s and which boomed in the 1990s.

Some points in his presentation caught people's imagination: the low population growth of 2% in the 2000s period while residential building activity was peaking across Quebec; the fiscal burden which rests almost entirely on the shoulders of residential owners, unlike other neighbouring or industrial municipalities where retailers absorb up to 34% of expenses; the lower average land value of properties compared to neighbouring towns; the explosive increase in the cost of some services such as police and the *Conseil Intermunicipal de Transport Laurentides* with respective increases of 90% and 775 %

since 2000 or in electricity costs (134 %), while municipal revenues increased barely 39 % in that period.

If some citizens had any doubts regarding the delicate financial situation of Deux-Montagnes, also facing large infrastructure works, this presentation certainly convinced them this was the case.

The Mayor of Deux-Montagnes, Marc Lauzon, could not hide his satisfaction at the attendance for this large meeting which he himself called for last winter, and at the enthusiasm participants showed for the task at hand.

“Citizens realized that our ‘call to arms’ was not exaggerated and for that reason alone this is a great success,” he stated, at the end of the Citizens’ Summit. “I was also able to observe that people are deeply attached to their city and I felt they were prompted by the wish to show solidarity in the face of the difficult choices ahead. I’m anxious to learn more about all the suggestions they made and I undertake to work hard with the team of municipal councillors to implement the recommendations that have issued from this extraordinary meeting, the first of its kind in the history of Deux-Montagnes. Already, however, this citizen consultation is a victory for democracy, since it has brought us to a show of complete transparency and prompted people to leave behind their observer role to actually become involved in public business.”

Ms Boivin will prepare a report on the workshop content during the summer. This report will be handed over to municipal authorities at latest by the end of August and the mayor has pledged to make it public soon thereafter.

Citizens have until June 18 to send suggestions and ideas on themes – a form for this purpose is available on the City Web site and in all municipal buildings. Participants at the Citizens’ Summit also indicated they would like to meet again in committees to continue discussions on the subjects tackled. The City does not rule out asking for their collaboration again for follow-up work.

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