

# EXTRA SATURDAY

## COMMENT CASTRO IN POWER because of embargo

Sola mors tyrannicida est: Death is the only way to get rid of tyrants, wrote Thomas More. And so it has proved for Fidel Castro. Sixteen years ago, he looked finished, but Castro never wavered in his revolutionary fervour. Page B5

### REPORT ON ...

## LIVING WITH the echoes of war

Thousands of veterans are coping with the debilitating effects of post-traumatic stress disorder. Now, Canada is better able to help mend their broken lives. Page B3

### MONTREAL DIARY

## CAFÉS WIRED ON lattes and laptops

There's a coffeehouse revolution going on, but technology isn't beating back the traditional café; it is transforming it. Page B2



FRANCIS VACHON THE GAZETTE

Former Canadiens player Joé Juneau, with his 5-year-old daughter, Héloïse, stands at the foot of a 250-year-old yellow birch on his property on the shores of Lac Sept Îles.

# SAVING THE MIGHTY TRITON

Story by MARK CARDWELL Special to The Gazette

**WHEN HE FIRST BROKE** into the National Hockey League in the early 1990s, Joé Juneau did like most players during the off-season — he played golf.

He soon realized, however, the time-intensive sport wasn't for him.

"It wasn't what I wanted to do with my summers," said Juneau, who ended his 12-year NHL career at the end of the 2003-04 season as a member the Montreal Canadiens. "What I wanted was to go into the woods to hike and fish."

Old habits, it seems, die hard. Growing up in the town of Pont Rouge, a short drive from his

comfortable retirement home on the shores of Lac Sept Îles, 70 kilometres northwest of Quebec City, Juneau, 38, spent a few weeks every summer roughing it with his family in the wilds of the Seigneurie du Triton.

A massive, publicly owned territory in the heart of the Laurentian forest just 80 kilometres north of here, the untamed Triton covers roughly 800 square kilometres, encompasses about 150

lakes and was once home to one of the most prestigious hunting and fishing clubs in Quebec.

It also is home, forestry experts say, to the province's oldest, and probably last, great stands of ancient mixed forest that feature enormous mature trees as well as the biggest and oldest remaining specimens of Quebec's official tree, the yellow birch.

"It's a paradise on Earth, totally unique," said Juneau, who leased a lakeside cabin in the Triton area a decade ago and continues to take his family there during the summer months, often piloting his own float plane into the area. "When you walk through these old forests with these huge centuries-old trees, man, it's like you've gone back in time. It's a heritage for Quebec, for our kids. It's got to be preserved and protected."

That's why Juneau, a seemingly shy, brooding type who claims to cherish his privacy above all

else, has willingly stepped back into the limelight to use his celebrity to help save part of the Triton from commercial logging.

Led by Gilles Tremblay, a one-time sawmill owner who now runs the Seigneurie du Triton wilderness resort, Juneau and a group of roughly 100 people responded to a public call in 2005 from Quebec's ministry of economic development, environment and parks for proposals to create new protected areas.

A conservation concept developed by the province a decade ago to help identify and preserve unique species, ecosystems and wild genetic resources, protected areas are officially defined as "land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity."

Please see TRITON, Page B4



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## OPEN HOUSE

Sunday, January 28, 2007 • 11.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Sherbrooke and McGill College

- Faculty information kiosks
- Admissions officers and student representatives
- Tours of campus, residences and the sports complex





B+ "There's no trees, the land's bald. When you love nature, it breaks your heart to see that." JOÉ JUNEAU

# PARADISE ON EARTH

## TRITON Old growth forest an endangered species

CONTINUED FROM B1

One of 650 submissions received by the ministry, which is rushing to meet a government commitment to protect eight per cent of Quebec's 1.7-million-square-kilometre landmass, the Triton group proposed the creation of a 580-square-kilometre protected zone, an area equal in size to the island of Montreal.

The idea – one of 70 retained by the government and under study for the past 18 months – has been opposed by Quebec's forestry industry, which wants the proposed conservation zone limited to 333 square kilometres.

According to the director of the ministry's economic and park heritage office, which is in charge of the protected-area creation process, a Solomon-like recommendation is about to be sent to cabinet, which has the power to establish protected areas through orders-in-council.

"We'll be making a proposal to the government of 400 square kilometres," said Patrick Beauchesne, a forestry engineer. "Our analysis suggests that will be sufficient to protect what we need to."

Far from being a victory for conservation, efforts to save the Triton illustrate that, when it comes to preserving woodlands in Quebec, nothing comes easy. They also expose the roots of the many acute problems facing Quebec's forestry industry, an economic, political and social behemoth that is at a crossroads.

In many ways, the Triton seems a shoo-in for protected-area status. Created by the Quebec government in 1886 for the exclusive use of the Triton Fish and Game Club, a once-famous wilderness resort that, in its mid-20th century heyday, counted Winston Churchill, three U.S. presidents and several Rockefellers and Molsons among its guests and members. The territory formed a hinterland junction between three provincial administrative regions – Quebec, Mauricie-Bois Francs and Saguenay-Lac St. Jean.

Set deep in the woods and buffered by vast forests that were more readily accessible to lumber companies, all of which had headquarters in Montreal and run by English-speaking men with personal connections to the club, the Triton remained in a near-pristine natural state for almost a century.

Nationalized in 1978 by Quebec's first Parti Québécois government, which passed a law abolishing private clubs and reserves, the territory was subsequently divided into several sectors with different mandates. Although some were dedicated to protecting the environment and enabling public access to the once-private domain, others were declared controlled harvesting zones and opened to logging.

Even as a child, when he and his family regularly boarded a train bound for Roberval on Lac St. Jean, disembarking with their canoes and supplies at a mile marker on the western edge of the Triton territory, Juneau knew trees were being felled there. It wasn't until he began flying over it, however, that he realized the extent of logging and its impact on the landscape.

"At 4,000 feet it's really depressing to see," said Juneau, a trained aeronautical engineer from the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y., where he starred for the school's Ivy League hockey team for four years before being drafted by the Boston Bruins in 1988. "There's no trees, the land's bald. When you love nature, it breaks your heart to see that."

When Juneau learned that Tremblay, who says he attracts as many as 3,000 mostly-European tourists a year to his wilderness lodge, was working on a proposal to have part of the region declared a protected area, Juneau decided to get involved.

Last winter, he and his father, Georges, a retired forestry technician who worked for Quebec's forestry ministry for 30 years, spent six weeks snowshoeing and camping in the Triton area doing an inventory of trees in its old-growth forests.

Using standardized data-gathering techniques, father and son found, among other things, several yellow birch which they estimated to be 450 years old.

"Some of them are this big," Juneau said, stretching his arms out as wide as possible. "My dad and I couldn't even touch fingers when we wrapped ourselves around them."

Their findings were later verified by a team of forestry technicians sent to the region last summer as part of the government's fact-finding mission related to the protected-area proposal.

Juneau also flew forestry experts, journalists and celebrities – notably singer/activist Richard Desjardins – up to the area to see the Triton's old-growth forests first-hand.

Luc Bouthillier, one of Juneau's guests and a long-time forestry professor at Université Laval who specializes in forestry politics and the impact of wood harvesting, was floored to see valleys of mature mixed wood forests with many massive hardwood specimens that predate Champlain's founding of Quebec in 1608.

"My jaw dropped," he said. "It was absolutely spectacular to wander among these gigantic trees that I thought still only existed in old photographs."

A kilometres-wide band of such mixed forests once spanned central Quebec, through the Outaouais, Laurentians, Mauricie, Quebec City and Charlevoix regions, Bouthillier said. Ecologically valuable in inestimable ways, he said that few, if any, of these forests remain undisturbed.

"It's very rare – in fact, the Triton is probably the only place of its kind left in Quebec," Bouthillier said. "To have such an ancient forest so close to major cities like Quebec City and Montreal is something very special and ecologically unique. We can learn a lot from it."

According to a five-year plan submitted to the Quebec government as part of the protected-area process for the Triton area, three forestry companies in the vicinity intended to begin building roads and harvesting trees by 2013 in the region's last untouched area – a 450-square-kilometre enclave where the Triton wilderness lodge and most leased cabins, including Juneau's, are located.

According to Beauchesne, the proposal that will be recommended to cabinet will force the companies to alter those plans.

"We've tried to achieve a balance," Beauchesne



This yellow birch in the Triton old-growth forest is believed to be about 450 years old. During a survey of the area, the tree's circumference was found to measure more than three metres.

said. When asked why his office is not recommending a larger protected area, Beauchesne said there was simply no need.

Neither conservationists nor the forestry industry seems satisfied with the government's proposal.

According to Guy Chevette, a senior minister in every Parti Québécois government since 1976 and the current president of the Quebec Forest Industry Council, which represents most of the province's lumber and pulp and paper manufacturing companies, the Triton camp leaseholders have overhyped their case in defence of narrow self interests.

"Joé Juneau is just trying to save his private fishing club," Chevette told The Gazette last week from Florida, where he was vacationing. "(The QFIC) is all for protected areas. We support a biodiversity network that will ensure our forests remain healthy. But we don't want important decisions that affect thousands of jobs taken based on conflicts of interest."

"Show us science, not the arguments of people who are trying to protect cottages in the woods," said Chevette, a former trade unionist and one-time

that have been destroyed by logging during the past several decades, they say improvements in harvesting – and the banning of clear-cutting in particular – have diminished the impact of forestry activities, especially in the boreal regions.

For Bouthillier, such arguments miss the point completely when it comes to talk of saving old-growth forests like those in the Triton area.

"You simply can't substitute an ancient forest with new seedlings," he said. "It's not just wood. It's a specific habitat and landscape that cannot be replicated."

Chevette, who, as a government minister, created 14 of Quebec's 23 national parks, said the Triton campaign is counterproductive.

"I'm the first to admit that mistakes have been made in the past," he said. "But (Richard) Desjardins's film, which was filled with lies and distortions, has created a kind of hysteria in Quebec about cutting trees. It's ridiculous."

Chevette said he hopes a forum planned for Montreal on March 5 and 6, which will be attended by a

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LUC BOUTHILLIER

minister responsible for Quebec forests who is often criticized for being the steward of the forestry industry's main lobby group, a position he took after retiring from politics in 2002.

While the forestry industry plants millions of trees each year across Quebec, forestry officials say the vast majority of reforestation – an estimated 80 per cent – occurs naturally.

And while the jury is still out on the long-term success of efforts aimed at restoring the many habitats

dozen forestry, wildlife, conservation and aboriginal groups, will bring more consensus and calm to the issue of protected areas.

For Bouthillier, more than words will be needed to heal the ills of Quebec's forestry industry.

"Everything's a total mess right now," he said. "Every kind of wood product with the exception of tissue paper, diapers and toilet paper is in decline. We're at a turning point."

The solution, he suggested, is nothing less than a whole new approach to the forestry industry. Instead of continuing to cut vast swaths of forests in a losing effort to compete with cheaper lumber and newsprint from Brazil and other developing countries, Bouthillier said Quebec should be producing more high-end wood products like doors and windows, and doing more with steel and aluminum in engineered products.

Desjardins, who is the spokesperson for Action Boréale, a group devoted to protecting the forests of the Abitibi region, is more blunt.

"It's time to take the forests away from companies that haven't got any more intelligence than to make two-by-fours," he told The Gazette. "All they do is cut, cut, cut – and the government says: 'Go, go, go.' It's a goddamned joke. The problem is, it's not funny."

For his part, Juneau, who has taken heat for his conservation efforts from wood-harvesting neighbours in his community, said he and his fellow group members "can live" with the government's proposed protected area for the Triton, which he hopes will soon be put before cabinet.

"It will save a lot of old-growth forest, but a lot will be left unprotected, too," he said. "I would have liked to see it all protected, not because I have a cottage there, but because it's so beautiful. And I don't really understand why some people don't see any harm in cutting down all the trees and destroying the place. To me, that's like cutting your veins."

## Province faces mounting pressure to save ecological gems

When it comes to forests, Quebec is impressively endowed. Almost two-thirds of the province is covered by trees, making wood one of Quebec's principal resources and a major source of economic and social wealth.

Although 90 per cent of the province's forests are publicly owned, most – together with private woodlots, which account for about 10 per cent of the estimated 4.2 billion cubic metres of total wood stocks in Quebec – are managed and exploited with the sole intent of providing raw materials to the lumber industry.

The industry provides direct or indirect employment to more than 150,000 people – including as many as 30,000 on the island of Montreal – and sustains about 250 communities that rely entirely on the harvesting, cutting and manufacturing of wood. The industry also exports close to \$12 billion in products annually.

With about 300 sawmills operating across the province, each processing more than 10,000 cubic metres of wood annually – mostly softwoods like pine and spruce, which account for 85 per cent of the province's total wood harvest – Quebec ranks second only to British Columbia in terms of softwood lumber production in Canada. In terms of lumber from hardwoods like the massive yellow birch found in the Triton area northwest of Quebec City, Quebec is the Canadian leader, accounting for 65 per cent of the nation's hardwood output.

According to Luc Bouthillier, who teaches forestry politics and public policy at Université Laval, the nature of traditional supply and management contracts between the Quebec government and the province's forestry industry entitles the latter to a steady supply of trees from Crown lands.

That has led to an intense commercial relationship between the two in which the government assesses, directs and controls harvests based on data collected by forestry officials, while the lumber companies carry out and manage work on the ground – everything from building roads and harvesting, to reforestation and habitat protection.

"It's like you giving me all the power to do what I want with your land and act as if I was the owner," Bouthillier said. "That invites all kinds of problems."

A big one is public concern over environmental protection in harvested areas.

Since 1999, when singer/activist Richard Desjardins's documentary, *l'Erreur Boréale*, sparked heated public debate about harvesting practices and the sustainability of Quebec's lumber industry, the provincial government has been under intense pressure to change the way it manages and protects our forests. At the same time, the government is under international pressure to protect the 40,000 species of wild plants and animals that live in the province, which is three times the size of France.

In 2004, Quebec boasted about 1,100 designated natural sites – including provincial and federal parks, wildlife sanctuaries and ecological reserves – across its 17 judicial and administrative regions. Those lands, however, added up to only 2.8 per cent of the province's territory, putting Quebec on the bottom rung among Canadian provinces, alongside Prince Edward Island, in terms of protected areas.

In 2000, the then-Parti Québécois government set an objective to raise the protected-area rate to eight per cent by 2005. The current Liberal government reiterated that pledge when it was elected in 2003 – the same year it created the Coulombe commission to look into the state of the forestry industry. In its report, the commission concluded massive overcutting had occurred in Quebec's forests. In addition to immediate reductions in harvest quotas and the creation of new management principles and a Chief Forester's office responsible for setting harvest limits, the commission recommended – and the government accepted – that Quebec protect eight per cent of its forests by the end of 2006 and 12 per cent by 2010.

While the government failed to meet the 2006 deadline, Patrick Beauchesne, the director of the ministry's economic and park heritage office, said progress in being made.

"We've created 500 new protected areas across Quebec since 2004, raising the amount of protected territory by three per cent," he said. "It's a lot when you consider that one per cent equals 17,000 square kilometres of territory. But we've still got a long way to go."

Conservation efforts, however, are often at loggerheads with the interests of the forestry industry, which has been rocked by 8,000 job losses in the past year, mostly as a result of a strong Canadian dollar and stiff international competition for its two main staples – newsprint and lumber.

MARK CARDWELL

