



N E W S R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

▫ Ce communiqué est aussi disponible en français ▫

SAINTE-LUCIE-DES-LAURENTIDES, Wednesday, January 25th, 2017.

The Ministry of Forests, Wildlife and Parks of Québec (MFFP) and the Coalition Mont-Kaaikop (Coalition) have agreed to work together on the planning of uses and the implementation of sustainable development solutions at Mont-Kaaikop. This desire for co-operation follows on from various exchanges between the parties with a view to resolving the impasse in the Mont-Kaaikop case.

PROPOSED COOPERATIVE REFLECTION

The Coalition Mont-Kaaikop accepted the MFFP's proposal on the planning and harmonization of Mont-Kaaikop uses. In its December 16th, 2016 response to the MFFP, the Coalition called for the cooperative reflection process to be a mutually agreed, innovative and inclusive approach, with a framework, operating rules and clear guidelines. In its response of January 11th, 2017, the MFFP welcomed the Coalition's willingness to work jointly with the MFFP for the implementation of sustainable management solutions at Mont-Kaaikop. The majority of the conditions having been accepted, the first meeting where a work plan and a schedule of meetings would be established should soon be confirmed.

POSITIONS ALWAYS OPPOSED

Despite this openness and willingness to dialogue, the positions of the parties remain, for the moment, rather encamped; The Coalition wishes to preserve the intact nature of Mont-Kaaikop, namely the unique forest ecosystems, and the MFFP still believes in harmonious planning of forestry while ensuring the multiplicity of uses. Thus, as part of their trade, the parties agreed to consider all options, ranging from natural and integral environmental conservation to forest management scenarios in defined areas.

To ensure the smooth running of the proceedings and the success of the process, the Coalition called for the talks to be led by an independent and neutral third party, accepted by the stakeholders. This could facilitate trade, allow for a reconciliation of positions or offer favorable

terrain for mediation, where appropriate. Although the principle of the presence of this third party has been accepted by the MFFP and the Coalition, it remains a point to negotiate.

SOME REACTIONS...

For the moment, there is room for hope. Mayor Serge Chénier of the Municipality of Sainte-Lucie-des-Laurentides said: “We are confident that the efforts of the past will allow us to foresee a negotiated solution, to ensure the quality of the territory at Mont-Kaaikop in the short, medium and long terms. For our small municipality, Mount Kaaikop is an important symbol of identity. Sainte-Lucie wants to develop even more ecotourism and it is certain that this majestic summit in the Laurentians is part of our plans for promotion and development. I am proud to have worked in this direction from the beginning and to continue to maintain the beauty, integrity and serenity of our natural landscapes.”

For the general manager of the MFFP, Pierre Ménard, he remains “convinced that sustainable forest management integrating the concerns of the local population is feasible at Mont-Kaaikop.”

According to the Chairman of the Coalition's Board of Directors, Robert Gravel: “We are obviously looking forward to a frank discussion with the MFFP. But this is not our first attempt at settlement. Among other things, there was the Dispute Resolution Committee of the late Commission for Natural Resources and the Territory of the Laurentians (CRNTL) and the Out-of-Court Settlement Conference of the Superior Court of Québec. As the popular say goes: The devil is in the details ... So we remain cautious and wish this time to be the right one.”

Recall that the conflict at Mont-Kaaikop enters its fourth year and that the territory is still targeted by logging plans. The Coalition has mandated an independent professional firm to characterize Mount Kaaikop and these data are expected to be compared to those of the government. According to studies known to date, Mount Kaaikop is in a rare natural state of conservation for a mountain of proximity of this scale. This was one of the reasons why the Coalition Mont-Kaaikop officially requested, last November, the creation of a protected area at Mont-Kaaikop.

These negotiations between the MFFP and the Coalition ensure that forest management plans at Mont-Kaaikop are suspended, as long as negotiations continue. Ultimately, the MFFP plans to “table, for public consultation, a sustainable forest management project that will gather the support of the largest number of stakeholders.”