

Property evaluation, taxes and the NCC

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Municipality of Pontiac

Evaluations of property in the Municipality of Pontiac are carried out by the MRC des Collines's Property Assessment Service (PAS). Municipal taxes are determined by this evaluation. Every three years the triennial evaluation roll of a third of the MRC is updated using market values at the midpoint of the preceding three years. If you and the PAS don't agree with the evaluation of your property you can appeal to the Administrative Tribunal of Quebec.

Gatineau Park is within the boundaries of Chelsea, Pontiac, La Pêche and Gatineau and is owned by the National Capital Commission (NCC), a Crown corporation that falls under Public Services and Procurement Minister Anita Anand's portfolio but operates at arm's length from the Ministry. The NCC makes a "payment in lieu of taxes" (PILT). Any disagreements on the evaluation may be appealed to a Dispute Advisory Panel (PILT DAP).

In 2018 the Municipality of Chelsea was shocked to find that the NCC did not pay the assessed increase in PILT for areas of Gatineau Park in Chelsea. The PAS had changed the assessment of some areas such as parking lots and camp sites from "conservation land" to "recreational tourism". Chelsea took this dispute to the PILT DAP which decided in February this year in Chelsea's favour. However the NCC has not yet paid the back taxes, amounting to nearly \$600,000. The city of Gatineau is also in dispute. The DAP sided with Gatineau in 2019. The NCC has so far ignored the DAP's recommendation.

How is Pontiac affected?

Pontiac's evaluation roll is re-assessed two years after Chelsea's. Almost half (about 218 km²) of the municipality is within Gatineau Park. In November 2020 it became clear that the NCC were not paying the increased PILT and Council agreed to give Maître Paul Wayland of DHC Avocats, the mandate to represent the municipality at the PILT DAP in its dispute with the NCC. (Me Paul Wayland also represented Chelsea and Gatineau in their disputes.) Hearings before the DAP are unlikely to start for a year, and like Chelsea, it may be three years before a decision is reached. Meanwhile, for one year (2020), Mayor Joanne Labadie says the NCC owes Pontiac \$134,071, a significant amount, about 2% of Pontiac's tax revenue. "During the Pandemic our municipality has experienced a significant increase of visitors to the Gatineau Park, leaving trash, parking illegally on rural roads and on private property, and blocking access to farmers' fields. It is the taxpayers of Pontiac that must assume the costs of extra signage, increased grading and road maintenance, policing, and search and rescue by our Fire department. I don't believe the residents of the Municipality of Pontiac should be subsidizing the Federal Government, but the other way around."

Petition

A group of Chelsea citizens has set up a House of Commons e-petition urging Minister Anand to respect the recommendation of her department's DAP and pay the municipality of Chelsea \$589,427 plus interest in tax arrears for the years 2018, 2019 and 2020. The petition (e-3264) is online on the House of Commons petition site. Pontiac MP Will Amos agreed to sponsor the petition which states, "The NCC is unfairly burdening the taxpayers of Chelsea, Gatineau and Pontiac with the cost of maintaining essential infrastructure serving NCC properties. ... The NCC is using the DAP process to delay payments to the Municipality of Pontiac."

Will Amos has been meeting with councillors, the NCC and local MPs Greg Fergus and Steven MacKinnon to try and get the dispute resolved. While "not endorsing the petition word for word," he said, "I'm quite happy to state publicly that the NCC should live up to its community responsibilities. It should respect the advice of the dispute advisory panel."