

# From farmland to railway and back to farmland, a history of the CP rail-line in the municipality of Pontiac

**1880s.** Farmers in Eardley township and other townships give right-of-way through their farms to build a railway.

**9 December 1884.** Formal opening of Aylmer to Quyon section of the Pontiac and Pacific Junction Railway, the first twenty miles. (BRYSON EQUITY, 18 December 1884)

**1888,** PPJ open from Waltham to Aylmer, continues on CP line Aylmer to Hull

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**c. 1990** CP offered rail-line to municipality of Pontiac for about \$1.3 million.??? Offer refused, municipality cannot afford this.

September 1991, Pierre-Yvon Alary, president of local farmers union (UPA) contacted neighbouring landowners of rail-line to come to a meeting. (Municipality supplied names and addresses, some people omitted).

7 October 1991, (reported in THE EQUITY, November 6). Municipality of Pontiac resolved to ask CPR to respect agricultural vocation of rail-line in agricultural zone and to negotiate with farmers to give them back possession of the land. (Resolution #312-91). At the same meeting “Offer from Maurice Lamarche for the sale of a few bridges from the railroad track.”

**8 October 1991,** first meeting of landowners adjacent to CP rail-line, at Luskville Community Centre. More than 90% attended (more than 200 people).

A **committee** was formed to look into buying rail-line. (Pierre-Yvon Alary, Serge Dumouchel, Gérard Lapierre, Gérard Martin, Stéphane Alary, Mo Laidlaw.)

THE EQUITY, November 20, 1991: “Mayor Eddie McCann stated that the Municipality doesn’t want to have to maintain the corridor. ...

Today CPR crews are removing the railroad ties and tracks from Aylmer to Wyman...

The wooden railroad bridge, tracks, and ties, at the Bristol Town Line and Highway 148, were removed November 13th.”

11 March 1992, committee members met CPR representative in Aylmer.

**15 April 1992,** CP asking prices:

Range 1 and 2, Terry Fox to Maple — not included.

Range 3 and 4, Maple to Braun 17.985 acres @ \$26,136 per acre = \$470,055.

Range 5, Braun to Rivière, 15.923 acres @ \$19,602 per acre = \$312,122.

Rivière to Kennedy,	81.893 acres @ \$600 per acre =	\$49,135.
Kennedy to Wyman,	121.678 acres @ \$400 per acre =	\$48,671.
grand total	about 237 acres	<u>\$879,983.</u>

2 May 1992, committee decides on counter-offer. Proposed prices, similar to municipal evaluation, agricultural land:

Range 1 and 2, Terry Fox to Maple — not included.		
Range 3 and 4, Maple to Braun	\$1000 per acre	\$17,985.00
Range 5, Braun to Rivière,	\$850 per acre	\$13,534.55
Rivière to Kennedy,	\$350 per acre	\$28,662.55
Kennedy to Wyman,	\$300 per acre	\$36,503.40.
grand total		<u>\$96,685.50</u>

8 May 1992, CP suggest deposit of \$250 from each of 140 neighbouring owners must accompany offer to buy rail-line. **CP recommends that the Association has permission under certain conditions to barricade the property or control weeds**, while maintaining the state of the property and releasing CP from any responsibility.

14 May 1992, 2nd general meeting of landowners about buying rail-line between Maple Lane and Wyman.

**3 June 1992, Ministry of Transport imposes moratorium** on sale of abandoned rail-lines, to allow study (ended 1 Feb. 1994).

15 June 1992. Second resolution by municipality of Pontiac supporting the farmers actions. (#229-92).

20 January 1994. UPA (Farmer's union, Gatineau-sud, français) inform MRC des Collines about committee representing neighbours in project to buy rail-line. Mayors support project, encourage committee to continue.

1 February 1994, Lifting of Ministry of Transport's 550+ day moratorium on sale of abandoned rail-lines. MRC des Collines produced no project for rail-line.

**25 Feb 1994**, Founding meeting of **Association des Voisins - CP Rail - Neighbours Association**, with aim of negotiating to buy rail-line.

Bylaws accepted. \$25 per year to maintain membership, \$250 deposit in trust to notary.

President: Pierre-Yvon Alary.

Directors:

Bristol to Kennedy Rd: James Stewart, Gérard Lapierre

Kennedy to Ch de la Rivière: Gérard Martin, Stéphane Alary

Ch de la Rivière to Maple: Diane Aldred, Mo Laidlaw

Maple Lane to Terry Fox (residential): François Bisson, Jim Bisson

Secretary treasurer: Gérald Desjardins

*Pontiac Journal*, January 24, 1995. “Hydro Quebec has entered the fray by suggesting to the farmers that it could use the rail-bed as a high power-line corridor from Hull to Quyon.”

THE EQUITY, Feb 8, 1995. “Judy Grant, warden of the MRC des Collines... 'We (MRC) back the municipality's stand to return the land to the farmers. ... Putting a trail through farm land is ridiculous.' Farmers adjacent to such trails, she says, have had endless problems.”

June 1995, the Neighbours' Association formed the “Super Group” to buy the Ch de la Rivière to Wyman section. (Alary said that it was difficult to get all the landowners in the residential area between Terry Fox and River Road to agree. (THE EQUITY Dec 6, 95.))

THE EQUITY, September 6, 1995. “CP's Don Simms met separately with both interested buyers - Municipality of Pontiac councillors and the Neighbours' Association in Luskville Aug. 30. Originally council had until Aug. 30 to submit an offer. (Simms gave Pontiac council) until Sept. 12 (to submit an offer). CP and the Neighbours' Association were close to a deal earlier this spring when the municipality stepped in and expressed an interest. It was reported that CP and the Neighbours' Association had agreed on \$350 an acre for the section of corridor from River Road to Bristol.” (About 180 acres).

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**Price negotiations, Riverains sector** (still “Voisins” at this date)

		<u>Terry Fox to Elm</u>		<u>Elm to Ch de la Rivière</u>	
		<u>Farm</u>	<u>Residential</u>	<u>Farm</u>	<u>Residential</u>
26 Jan 95	CP asks	\$600/acre	\$26,141/acre	\$600/acre	\$21,798/acre
	value	\$9288	\$421,900	\$11,736	\$80,000
	area	15.48 acres	16.14 acres	19.56 acres	3.67 acres

**ie total cost Terry Fox to Ch de la Rivière: \$523,924 for about 55 acres.**

(at the same time CP asked \$500-600 per acre for Ch de la Rivière to Wyman, a **total of \$98,000 for about 179 acres.**)

23 March 95	Voisins	\$600/acre	\$2000/acre	\$600/acre	\$2000/acre
18 May 95	CP asks	\$600/acre	\$17,500/acre	\$600/acre	\$17,500/acre
20 June 95	Voisins	\$600/acre	\$2000/acre	\$600/acre	\$2000/acre
29 June 95	CP asks	\$600/acre	\$10,000/acre	\$600/acre	\$12,000/acre
7 Oct. 95	CP asks	\$600/acre	\$10,000/acre	\$600/acre	\$10,000/acre
25 Oct. 95	Voisins	\$600/acre	\$2000/acre	\$600/acre	\$2000/acre
	value	\$9,288	\$32,280	\$11,736	\$7,340

**ie total “offer”, Terry Fox to Ch de la Rivière: \$60,644 for about 55 acres.**

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THE EQUITY November 22, 1995. “With the CRDO kicking in \$90,000, the municipality has offered CP \$150,000 for the railbed” (between Terry Fox and Wyman).

*Pontiac Journal* December 5, 1995. “At a press conference on November 30, ... Pierre-Yvon Alary announced that CP has accepted the [CP Rail Neighbours Association Super] Group’s offer to buy the old rail-line between River Road and the municipality’s western limit. (The Super Group has 40-plus members.) CP Rail (said that) its only obligation is to its shareholders, for the best price.”

“The municipality’s offer was too low for the entire right-of-way” Simms said. (THE EQUITY, December 6, 1995).

(Super Group reported to have paid \$78,000 (THE EQUITY, Sept. 17, 1997), \$78,900 (THE EQUITY, March 25, 1998), or **\$78,700** (THE EQUITY, April 1, 1998) for the land, \$433-\$438 per acre, plus surveying and legal fees of about **\$50,000**. (THE EQUITY, Sept. 17, 1997))

19 Dec 95, Voisins “Super Group” has general meeting.

15 January 1996, L’Association des Voisins du CP Rail, “Super Group” incorporates.

Early 1996. Diane Aldred, François Bisson, Jim Bisson and Mo Laidlaw were not about to give up on the Terry Fox to Ch de la Rivière part and met as subgroup of the Association des Voisins.

13 Feb. - 21 March 1996 Contracts for sale of rail-line from Ch de la Rivière to Wyman signed by CP and l’Association des Voisins du CP Rail, “Super Group”.

23 Feb 1996, meeting, Terry Fox to Ch de la Rivière sector, do we still want to buy? Some owners prepared to pay more to obtain land. Directors permitted to negotiate up to \$8000 per acre for residential including cottages. Agreed to collect money by 9 March so as to be able to offer immediate payment.

**11 Oct. 96 Voisins offer \$55,000 for Terry Fox to Ch de la Rivière**, based on promises to purchase received at \$600/acre for farmland, \$2000/acre residential.

CP ask for delay to obtain revised evaluation.

*Aylmer Bulletin*, October 28, 1996. “Before residents even got the chance to publicly pan a snowmobile trail along the CP Rail right of way in Aylmer, councillors announced the proposal was dead.”

**Nov. 1996. Accounts transferred from Voisins to Riverains** (members living between Terry Fox and Ch de la Rivière), François Bisson now secretary-treasurer of Riverains.

**4 April 1997, CP accepted \$55,000 offer.** Pierre-Yvon Alary was the go-between, dealing with Donald Simms of the Marketing sector of CP.

2 May 1997, general meeting at Fire Hall, let members know costs etc.  
To buy from CP, have to be a corporation.

11 September 1997. Mayor Marcel Lavigne used his power to veto a resolution, two days after council voted to expropriate the rail-line on September 9, because it did not specify where the money would come from. [This motion seemed to apply only to the portion belonging to the Super Group, setting aside \$130,000 to cover costs of land, (\$78,000) plus legal and surveying fees, (\$50,000.)] (*Pontiac Journal* Sept. 23, 1997.)

THE EQUITY October 1, 1997. Council were told that it is illegal to set up a public land reserve by resolution. It must be done by bylaw

14 October 1997. Pontiac council resolve to form a citizens committee to study potential of recreational corridor and produce a report by 1 December 1997 at latest.

**13 November 1997. Association des propriétaires riverains du CP rail** incorporated.  
François Bisson negotiated group rates with a notary and surveyor, contacted everyone, made sure we had insurance etc.

9 December 1997. Pontiac council passed a resolution asking MRC to issue an interim control bylaw (prohibit new uses, new structures, cadastral changes) on former rail-line, to allow study on developing the corridor as a recreational and tourist trail.

11 December 1997. MRC told municipal council to proceed with its own interim control bylaw and study.

6 January 1998, offer to survey from Jacques Bérubé chosen as lowest offer.

**10 February, 1998 the Association became the owner of the 55 acres (9 km).**  
Then started the business of surveying and transferring individual parcels.

27 March 1998. Group of Voisins and Riverains meet Sylvain Simard, minister responsible for Outaouais, get his assurance that funding would only be available for a trail project with wide local support, not for one that splits the community.

13 April 1998, M Jean Thiffault, ATO, invited to meet Voisins, Riverains, to discuss recreational trails, but did not show.

**14 April 1998 Pontiac council vote 4-1 to expropriate “35-km trail”, to form a management committee and to establish a two year reserve (freeze).**

Mayor Lavigne removed himself from table.

21 April 1998. CPTAQ acknowledge receipt of Voisins application to sell lots.

THE EQUITY, May 13, 1998. “The CRDO, the ATO, and the URSLO among others have agreed to support a trail and will pay \$15,000 to challenge the CPTAQ, leaving the municipality to pick up the remaining \$5000 cost of a consultant.”

THE EQUITY, May 27, 1998. Pontiac MRC voted to hire André Bendwell as consultant. He arranged a 60-day extension to the deadline to protest the CPTAQ decision. CRDO increased support to \$20,000. Mayors also voted to expropriate 800 feet of the corridor in Bristol, now owned by the Neighbours Association (Voisins). “Ironically” [predictably], ATVs, a major concern for those against the trail (on the rail-line) in Pontiac municipality, are now plaguing residents along the trail in MRC Pontiac. Large boulders and “No ATV” signs will be placed around entrances to block ATV use.

THE EQUITY June 3, 1998 Pontiac council passed resolution to appeal CPTAQ decision and hire Bendwell to represent them.

9 June 1998. Pontiac council gave CCU a mandate to study different routes to link Aylmer and Bristol, through the municipality. (Including “Gendron” route.)

22 June 1998 approx. Formal notification of reserve (full of errors) received by Riverains, but not all individual owners.

9 July 1998 approx. Second formal notification of reserve (with some errors corrected) received by Riverains, but not all individual owners.

13 July 1998, CPTAQ hearing in Longueuil re authorization for “Super group” to transfer lots.

14 July 1998 approx. 3rd formal notification of reserve (with some errors corrected) received by Riverains, but not all individual owners.

1 September 1998. Elected officials, CRDO and ATO receive and discuss Bendwell report.

November 1998, new council elected, with Bruce Campbell as mayor.

26 January 1999. Voisins receive preliminary authorization to sell individual lots, from CPTAQ.

By February 1999 all the individual parcels that **Riverains** had promised to buy were transferred except in the agricultural zone (Maple to Braun - 14 members). In agricultural zone, CPTAQ authorization is required to transfer lots.

26 February 1999. Bendwell, representing MRC Pontiac, asks CPTAQ to revise decision re Voisins Super Group.

9 March 1999. Resolution 102-99. Pontiac council votes 6:1 to notify Beaudry Bertrand, (lawyers) that the request to appeal the CPTAQ decision came from the mayor, Bruce Campbell, personally, and not from the municipality, and that council has no intention of paying any resulting bill.

31 May 1999. CPTAQ rejects request to revise their decision re Voisins.

28 September 1999. CPTAQ makes preliminary authorization of Riverains' request to divide and sell rail-line.

30 September 1999. "Les Amis du Sentier Pontiac/Friends of the Pontiac Trail" hired lawyers to serve papers on Councillors Denise Therriault and Bruno Alary, charging conflict of interest, threatening them with legal proceedings if they did not resign. This gets lots of publicity, but no legal proceedings are ever initiated. Council was stalemated for several months over this issue.

2 November 1999. CPTAQ authorizes Riverains to sell to individual owners.

THE EQUITY, November 3, 1999. "The east bloc councillors last week requested that Municipal Affairs install a tutor to eliminate deadlocks."

THE EQUITY, December 8, 1999. 'The "Friends of the Trail" passed along a \$13,000 bill from their lawyer Marc Lapointe to the Pontiac MRC.'

December 20, 1999. MRC des Collines voted to identify rail-line as the link between existing trails, and identify "32 km" of abandoned CP Rail line in its master plan. Also requested CPTAQ to authorize a use other than agriculture.

THE EQUITY, January 19, 2000. Mayor Campbell publicly accepts about \$74 collected by Jean-Guy Lapierre after council question his expense claim for \$54.30.

20 January 2000, large delegations at MRC des Collines meeting, from "Friends" and "Neighbours". Neighbours ask for feasibility study.

"Les Amis du Sentier Pontiac" persuaded the MRC Pontiac, CUO and others to appeal CPTAQ decisions for both Voisins and Riverains. Hearing set for December 1999, but CUO lawyer asks for delay.

1 Feb 2000, letter from Riverains to Tribunal administratif du Québec supporting CPTAQ decision. Existence of alternative routes for trails seen as important factor by CPTAQ.

14-16 February, 2000, Tribunal administratif du Québec held in Hull.

THE EQUITY, February 23, 2000. “Richard Sharpe, “Friends of the Pontiac Trail”: ‘We’re just happy we got (the hearing) in front of an impartial tribunal.’ ... ‘Our number one concern is to see that landowners are satisfied.’”

15 May 2000 Tribunal overturned the appeal, ie Voisins and Riverains now allowed to transfer lots in agricultural zone to individual owners.

24 May 2000. Meeting with Commissioner Rolland Dion about recreational trails (Pierre Robillard, Diane Aldred, François Bisson, & Mo Laidlaw). Directors took the positive approach of proposing well-planned alternatives to a rail-line trail, that have more to offer residents of municipality of Pontiac, and requested a study of routes.

Freeze extended for two years from 15 July 2000 “to allow study”.

29 September 2000. Agricultural-zone properties start being transferred.

8 November 2000. Formal notice of imposition/renewal of reserve received. (English version was nonsense, requested French version.

2000 - 2001. Agricultural zone lots transferred.

7 June 2002. The four directors met and decided to sell off the remaining previously unwanted land at the best price possible. Also look into procedure for winding up the association. Develop a presentation for bike trail study, when public consultation is held.

30 September 2002. Remaining land sold off to five neighbouring owners.

c. 15 August 2003, \$248 returned to each member to initiate closing of Association. (All members paid extra \$425 to pay for the originally unsold portions.)

### **3 October 2003**

Wind-up l’Association des propriétaires Riverains du CP Rail.

## **Bicycle trail study**

(Marc Fortin is the CLD contact: 1-877-456-2121 x225.)

15 April 2002. CLD meeting. CLD has mandate to study bicycle trails or recreational trails in municipality of Pontiac.



June 2003. Génivar has been retained but financing has to be sorted out with new government.

11 September 2003. CLD still waiting for funding from CRDO within a few weeks. Funding has been received from SDEO (société de diversification économique de l'Outaouais), URLSO (loisirs, sport) and municipality.

**There will be public consultation meetings as part of the study.**

24 September 2003. Pontiac resolution 03-09-872 mandates Génivar to do a feasibility study of recreational trails between Wyman and Aylmer. Génivar had the lowest offer, **\$39,053.00** including taxes, of which municipal contribution is \$5000.