

VILLE DE LAC-BROME

TOWN OF BROME LAKE

picture by Victoria Gauvreau, age 5



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familiiale **POLICY**

POLITIQUE *family* *familiale* POLICY

We are thrilled to present the Town of Brome Lake's Municipal Family Policy! This plan of action is the culmination of two years' work by a group of parents, professionals and volunteers, with support from the Town Council and administration.

Through this policy, the Town of Brome Lake commits itself to becoming a place of opportunity for families.

We will offer families:

- *the opportunity to prosper...* through our actions in housing, economic development and public security;
- *the opportunity to flourish...* through our actions in recreation and in protecting the natural environment ; and
- *the opportunity to participate...* through our actions in strengthening community life.

We believe that this document is a first step, and we look forward to seeing how our journey together will unfold over the coming years.



Cynthia Wilkinson
Municipal Councillor,
Town of Brome Lake



Johanne Morin
Executive Director,
Lac-Brome Recreation and Community Services

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M EMBERS OF THE FAMILY COMMITTEE

Our thanks go to the members of the Family Policy Committee, who gave so much time, thought and energy to the process:

Cathy Anderson, Nurse, CSSS La Pommeraie

Helen Brown, Business Owner, Member of the Chamber of Commerce and the Planning Advisory Committee

Richard Burcombe, Sûreté du Québec

Gary Crandall, Volunteer, Brome Lake Food Bank

Dominique Désy, Physician, Clinique médicale Brome-Mlssisquoi

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WELCOME TO TOWN OF BROME LAKE

STRENGTHS

Town of Brome Lake is a municipality made up of seven hamlets and villages scattered across a 205 km² rural territory. Nestled in the rolling hills of the Eastern Townships, the Town is perfectly situated, offering a bucolic landscape within easy reach of Montreal. Knowlton, the most densely-populated sector and service hub for the municipality, is recognized as one of the most beautiful villages in Quebec. A rich architectural heritage, quaint boutiques and access to the lovely Brome Lake are among Knowlton's many tourist attractions, but each sector has its own unique character which draws seasonal and permanent residents alike.

In contrast to many rural areas, Town of Brome Lake has seen an increase in its population from 5444 in 2001 to 5629 in 2006. An additional 3600 people have a second home within the territory of the municipality. Historically, the population is well-educated, with a slightly higher proportion of 35 to 64-year-olds having obtained a university-level education than the average for Quebec (29% vs 24% in 2006). The number of households living in poverty hovers around 10%, which is significantly less than the average of 17% for Quebec (Statistics Canada, 2006). The median after-tax income in 2005 of couple households with children was \$ 65 820 (compared to \$ 65 160 for Quebec); for female lone-parent families, it was \$ 31 981 (compared to \$ 33 254 for Quebec); while for male lone-parent families, it was \$ 61 268 (compared to \$ 41 758 for Quebec). In addition, the municipality benefits from the dynamic interaction of the French (45%) and English (47%) linguistic communities, and from the remarkable willingness of its citizens to contribute to the quality of life of the Town through volunteering and civic engagement.

CHALLENGES

Town of Brome Lake's idyllic location and its educated, prosperous and engaged population are enormous assets for the municipality. At the same time, a demographic profile like ours also presents certain challenges for our long-term development. For example, our population may be on the rise, but this growth is limited to the 50-64 age group of early retirees, who are either new arrivals or are turning second homes into permanent residences. Twenty-one percent of the population is aged over 65. The median age of the population has risen from 46.2 in 2001 to 49.5 years in 2006. In 2006, there were 545 households in Town of Brome Lake containing a couple with children, 145 female lone-parent families and 25 male lone-parent

families. The number of households with children (both couple households with children and single-parent families) has dropped from 765 in 2001 to 715 in 2006, representing about 30% of total private households in Town of Brome Lake. Locally, both the English and French schools have begun actively seeking new ways to attract and maintain enrolment, while across the region, schools and social workers are reporting increasing drop-out rates and psychosocial problems among youth, particularly within the English-speaking community.

Access to housing remains a priority for local families. In 2005, the average municipal evaluation of homes owned by residents was \$ 213 521. Brome Lake's housing prices may remain attractive to Montrealers seeking a better quality of life in the country, but neighbouring municipalities offer lower rents, lower purchase prices and a range of incentive programs for families. More modestly-priced homes may be found in some of the more rural parts of our municipality, but there is then a trade-off for families in terms of transportation and access to services and resources offered by the Town. The Family Committee found that, in general, the Town suffers slightly from a reputation for being a little too quiet and a little too expensive for the average family.

The demographics of Town of Brome Lake present us with some intriguing opportunities. With such a high proportion of people over 55 within the municipality, many of our citizens have already weathered the challenges and joys of a raising young family and have watched their children grow and leave home. Some are part of large extended family networks close by, while others have children and grandchildren living all over the world. Even if the focus of the Family Policy is on households in which children currently live, the reality is that in many cases, it will be the energy and experience of our older citizens which will need to be deployed in order for our actions to have any meaningful results. Town of Brome Lake is uniquely placed to be a living, breathing model of the successful integration of many generations within a community, and therefore a precious example within broader society.

OPPORTUNITIES

If the role of the municipality is to provide a framework within which families can flourish, it is the role of the community itself to bring life to that framework. There are many citizens of Town of Brome Lake who, in small and large ways, within the spheres of their own personal lives, are champions of the family. These are the grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends who do everything from picking up the kids after school to coaching the soccer-softball league, as well as offering parents a listening ear and the reassuring voice of experience. As a municipality, we are also privileged to see community leaders emerging from across the social spectrum and driving new ideas forward. Some of these leaders are parents, many are

grandparents, while others are simply people of all ages who are willing to commit their time and talents to help their neighbours and friends. Their accomplishments are remarkable: a new multifunctional community centre; the first seniors' day centre in Quebec to be hosted in the community and not in a geriatric institution; a volunteer-run local paper; a summer farmer's market; an International School program in development for one school and a new, bilingual program for the other; as well as a whole range of new festivals and business opportunities.

The Town is watching the current demographic developments closely and is committed to finding ways to meet the needs of all its citizens, young and old, French and English, permanent residents and cottage owners. The good news is that in serving families, the Town also serves the wider community. Safe sidewalks, pleasant green spaces, well-equipped recreational facilities, accessible services, local employment opportunities and a diverse housing market are good for everyone. As the Family Policy Action Plan is implemented over the next three years, the Town must ensure therefore that there is space at the table for everyone to bring ideas and energy, regardless of age or family circumstances.



WHAT IS A FAMILY POLICY?

A Municipal Family Policy is a three-year plan of action, adopted by a town in order to create a community which is welcoming and supportive of families. It applies to every area of municipal responsibility, including infrastructure and transport, the environment, economic development and community life.



WHY DO WE WANT A FAMILY POLICY IN TOWN OF BROME LAKE?

Among Town of Brome Lake's greatest strengths is the exceptional quality of life enjoyed by many of our citizens. People, young and old, come here and stay here for the clean environment, safe streets, local services and vibrant social and cultural life which sets Town of Brome Lake apart. By actively seeking to support a strong community in which many generations thrive side-by-side, the Town is also taking steps to ensure sustainable, local development in the long term.



WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE FAMILY POLICY?

The Town's goal therefore is to implement a Municipal Family Policy which will:

- preserve and promote the quality of life of Town of Brome Lake's families;
- attract new families to Town of Brome Lake; and
- ensure the sustainable social and economic development of the municipality.

The Family Policy is a tangible expression of Town of Brome Lake's concern for the wellbeing of its families, whether they have just arrived or have lived here for generations.

RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES

According to the research of the Family Policy Committee, this is what families need in order to thrive in our community:

- appropriate, affordable family housing
- employment opportunities
- good-quality education for their children
- local health, social and community services
- a range of recreational programs and facilities which will encourage them to socialise, relax, learn and stay healthy

The municipality cannot address all of these needs in its own. However, there are steps the Town can take in each of its jurisdictions which will have a significant, positive impact. These steps are outlined in the Action Plan presented in the following pages.

The importance of close collaboration between the different municipal departments and between the municipality and its partners cannot be overstressed. The responsibility for mobilizing the community and for overseeing the smooth operation of these partnerships rests with the designated Town Councillor, with the Director of Lac-Brome Recreation and Community Services, and with the members of the Family Committee, according to the established evaluation process.

ACTION PLAN NOTE: WHAT'S A FAMILY?

The energy and vitality of a municipality depend on the active involvement of all generations. As a municipality, we have neither the desire nor the right to create or promote a single, moral definition of what constitutes a family.

However, the process of creating a municipal family policy requires us to ask "Who is this policy for?" It also requires us to make the distinction between a family policy (intended to support families) and a general, Town policy (intended to support all citizens). In this context, and particularly with regards to proposed incentive programs, the definition of family must also be specific enough to serve as an admissibility criterion.

For the purpose of this Family Policy only therefore, the families whom we are targeting are families which include:

- at least one minor child and his or her parent(s) (or those who assume parental responsibility);
- households made up of a couple and all their children, brought together by the relationship between their parents;
- households made up of one or two parents and their adult children.



ACTION PLAN

2009-2011

VILLE DE LAC-BRÔME 
TOWN OF BROME LAKE

PRIORITY # 1

Town of Brome Lake will welcome and value families within the municipality.

- by capitalizing on the unique character of the municipality, and on the diversity of village and rural lifestyles it offers
- by putting in place an incentive program to encourage families to move to or remain within Town of Brome Lake
- by supporting access to appropriate housing for families in Town of Brome Lake
- by putting in place a system for gathering data which will enable us to better identify the number of resident families in Town of Brome Lake and monitor the success of our actions



HOUSING IN TOWN OF BROME LAKE*

- Detached, single-family homes make up 82.5% of available housing in Town of Brome Lake
- 82.1% of housing in Town of Brome Lake is owner-occupied
- 71% of the housing available in Town of Brome Lake was built before 1986
- The average sale price of a three-bedroom bungalow in the region (Royal LePage Survey of Canadian House Prices for Cowansville/Ville de Lac-Brome/Bromont, Second Quarter, 2008): \$ 145 000
- The average sale price of a three-bedroom house with two stories in the region (Royal LePage Survey of Canadian House Prices for Cowansville/Ville de Lac-Brome/Bromont, Second Quarter, 2008): \$ 185 000
- The average municipal valuation of homes owned by Town of Brome Lake residents (2005): \$ 213 526
- The average municipal valuation of homes within Town of Brome Lake, owned by non-residents (2005): \$ 281 343

* statistics are taken from Statistics Canada 2006 Census, unless otherwise noted

PRIORITY # 1

Town of Brome Lake will welcome and value families within the municipality.

ACTIONS	IN PLACE	TO COME
Use the Town website as a tool to promote the sense of community in each sector	X	
Publicise events being held in the community centres in Foster, Fulford and Bondville, and other community events in all sectors	X	
Ensure that all sectors are represented on Town committees	X	
Highlight the diversity of lifestyles offered here in all the Town's promotional material		X
Offer a gift basket to new families. This could include a gift certificate to local businesses and information about Town services, recreation, schools, daycares and community centres. Families would be encouraged to come and collect the basket at the Centre Lac-Brome, which provides an opportunity for them to see the facilities and find out more about what is on offer		X
Identify ways in which the Town can enable more families to purchase or rent a home in Town of Brome Lake, through zoning regulations or by other means		X
Look for opportunities to purchase land within the territory which can then be sold at cost to families wanting to build a home in Town of Brome Lake		X
Offer property or welcome tax reductions or exemptions for families buying a first home in Town of Brome Lake, whether they currently rent here or move in from elsewhere		X
Review current administrative practices with employees at the Town to see how we can best monitor the success of our actions (tracking numbers of families, location and type of new housing construction, etc)		X
Collect and compile this information about local families, and then evaluate the effectiveness of our data collection at the end of the 3-year period		X

PRIORITY # 2

Town of Brome Lake will offer a safe and healthy environment.

- by ensuring safe travel in and around the community
- by maintaining and ensuring the safety of parks and other recreational facilities
- by minimizing opportunities for vandalism in public places
- by helping equip families to ensure their own safety
- by continuing to actively protect the natural environment

PRIORITY # 2

Town of Brome Lake will offer a safe and healthy environment.

ACTIONS	IN PLACE	TO COME
Ensure that sidewalks throughout the municipality are well-maintained	X	
Remove cedar hedge around Lions Park	X	
Move children's play areas closer to the Centre Lac-Brome	X	
Carry out fire safety outreach visits to homes, schools and daycares	X	
Participate in national and provincial fire prevention and emergency preparedness public awareness campaigns	X	
Encourage a close working relationship with all residents around Brome Lake to ensure the quality of the water is maintained	X	
Protect riverbanks and shorelines by enforcing existing regulations	X	
Protect the architectural heritage and rural landscape of the municipality via the regulations established by the zoning committee	X	
Ensure that up-to-date information about garbage reduction and recycling is available on the Town website, and provide clear information about dump opening hours and regulations concerning the disposal of hazardous materials, etc	X	
Hire dedicated maintenance staff for parks and recreational infrastructures	X	
Ensure effective monitoring of water usage and careful management of local sources of drinking water		X
Install a continuous sidewalk along Victoria St from Lakeside to Knowlton Rd to enable safe pedestrian access to the Centre Lac-Brome		X
Install a continuous sidewalk along Knowlton Rd from Maple to Victoria to enable safe pedestrian access to the IGA and other businesses		X
Host a car seat clinic at the Fire Department's Open House once a year, and train a staff member to offer the service on an ad-hoc basis		X
Explore the possibility of an after-school bus service from the two elementary schools to the Centre to enable more children to participate in activities		X
Install cycle paths or lanes which are safe for families to use across the territory		X
Continue to apply pressure to the Ministry of Transport and the SQ to ensure that the pedestrian crossing next to the Post Office is well-maintained, visible and kept free of parked vehicles. Investigate what further means may be available to the Town to better identify and protect this crossing		X

ACTIONS	IN PLACE	TO COME
Review current park and recreational infrastructure maintenance practices and scheduling		X
Clearly signpost motor vehicle bans in all parks and on walking paths		X
Improve lighting in all parks		X
Offer Internet safety workshops for parents and introduce internet safety concepts to children involved in our programming; organize or offer additional workshops to families on safety issues		X
Create a composting facility for materials from Town landscaping work (branches, grass cuttings, etc)		X
Promote composting at home. Make information available on the Town website, support MRC training sessions and other initiatives. Investigate the possibility of making the Town's composting facility accessible to condo and apartment-dwellers		X

PRIORITY # 3

Town of Brome Lake will provide exceptional quality of life.

- by continuing to offer a wide range of organised indoor and outdoor activities for different ages, including activities for the whole family
- by seizing opportunities to enlarge, improve or create recreational infrastructures which will meet the present and future needs of the community
- by encouraging free play through play equipment and playgrounds for children which are safe and age-appropriate
- by ensuring equitable access to recreation for families, whatever their financial circumstances
- by encouraging young people to participate in community activities and municipal programs

PRIORITY # 3

Town of Brome Lake will provide exceptional quality of life.

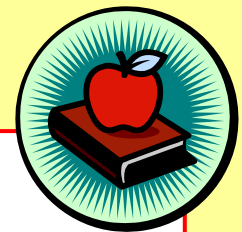
ACTIONS	IN PLACE	TO COME
Reorganize existing playgrounds in Lions Park according to the 2007 Master Plan	X	
Offer a diverse program of physical, cultural and recreational activities throughout the year	X	
Advertise regularly in order to recruit teachers and animators to lead these activities	X	
Reserve space at the Centre Lac-Brome for family activities run by the municipal recreation program (drop-in daycare, workshops and presentations, community kitchens, playgroups)	X	
Ensure that local community groups know that space is available at the Centre for them to offer other family activities	X	
Continue to support local sports-league volunteers through administrative help, equipment, etc.	X	
Build a new skating rink at the Centre Lac-Brome	X	
Investigate the possibility of building an outdoor swimming pool at the Centre	X	
Offer a family fee structure (1st child, 2nd child, etc) for activities offered by the municipal recreation program	X	
Allow payment by instalments for more expensive activities (summer day camp, for instance)	X	
Encourage young people to join the Youth Recreation Committee ("Dance Committee")	X	
Support the work of the Maison des jeunes (Teen Centre) by offering space and equipment and by publicizing their activities	X	
Maintain the annual intermunicipal agreements which enable Town of Brome Lake citizens to access recreational programs elsewhere at the same cost as residents (e.g. Waterloo arena, Cowansville swimming pool)	X	
Maintain the annual contract with St-Edouard which provides access to their gym facilities for the recreation program	X	
Create a new playground for 2 to 5-year-olds in Lions Park, next to the Centre Lac-Brome	X	
Offer at least one intergenerational recreational activity per session		X
Choose flexible park and playground equipment which is "multi-generational" and provides interest and opportunity for use by different groups of people		X
Review the condition, use and layout of existing playgrounds in all parks		X
Sign an agreement with Knowlton Academy to consolidate access to their facilities for the municipal recreation program		X

ACTIONS	IN PLACE	TO COME
Improve buildings and landscaping at Douglass Park		X
Explore the possibility of increasing public access to Brome Lake via donation or purchase of land		X
Create a working group, including parents, to examine the fee structure for recreation, including what measures could be put in place to encourage parent volunteers		X
Develop the “Young Fire Officer” program		X
Ensure that local teens are aware of job opportunities which exist in the Town or in the summer recreation program		X

PRIORITY # 4

Town of Brome Lake will facilitate access to high-quality local services.

- by encouraging and supporting local health and social service providers to offer services locally
- by helping individual families access local care and services
- by continuing to provide flexible, part-time alternatives for child care
- by supporting the role of parents
- by continuing to offer recreational infrastructure in all sectors



FAMILY SERVICES AND EDUCATION

- The Town has a multipurpose community centre which houses the medical clinic and CLSC, in addition to the Town's recreation and community services
- The Town currently benefits from a subsidy to support a part-time Family Resource Person, who also offers drop-in daycare services and parent/child workshops
- 156 students were enrolled at St-Édouard school at the start of the 2008-2009 year
- 248 students were enrolled at Knowlton Academy at the start of the 2008-2009 year
- Teens from Town of Brome Lake usually attend one of two secondary schools in Cowansville
- CPE La Passerelle des mousses offer 68 full-time daycare places in its installation and had a waiting list in Fall 2008 of about 80 children
- Subsidized home daycare services are managed from Bedford.

PRIORITY # 4

Town of Brome Lake will facilitate access to high-quality local services.

ACTIONS	IN PLACE	TO COME
Continue to provide space and receptionist services at reduced cost to the CLSC service outlet at the Centre Lac-Brome	X	
Offer space at the Centre Lac-Brome for health promotion activities or for public health professionals and social workers to meet with clients, free of charge	X	
Train Centre Lac-Brome staff to ensure that people can be effectively referred to services offered locally	X	
Recruit and retain new family doctors by offering supportive working conditions (space, partnerships, family policy)	X	
Participate in the Youth Round Tables (regional and local)	X	
Facilitate support for vulnerable families by local volunteer and community groups (for instance, by providing space for the Food Bank and by putting families in need in touch with service groups)	X	
Train staff in order to guarantee confidentiality to families in crisis who access our social and community services	X	
Offer skill-building and confidence-building programs and workshops to parents on an ongoing basis	X	
Offer a drop-in daycare service and ensure that the service is well-publicized	X	
Continue to allocate financial and human resources to the upkeep of parks and skating rinks in each sector	X	
Encourage and support local volunteers to take charge of the community halls in Bondville, Foster and Fulford	X	
Investigate the possibility of increasing the number of hours and places available at the drop-in daycare		X
Consolidate the position of Family Resource Person at Lac-Brome Recreation and Community Services		X
Work together with the CSSS to broaden the range and timetables of services offered to parents in Town of Brome Lake (parent-baby clinics, pre- and postnatal courses, workshops for parents of teens, etc)		X

PRIORITY # 5

Town of Brome Lake will support sustainable local economic development.

- by promoting the development of communications infrastructure which will support entrepreneurship, self-employment and tele-commuting
- by encouraging existing businesses and attracting new ones to the municipality
- by partnering with local employers in order to address their workforce needs, and to provide information and support for people seeking work within the municipality

WORKING IN TOWN OF BROME LAKE*



- 23% of the experienced labour force in Town of Brome Lake work in sales and services and 17 % work in management occupations, up from 21% and 13% in 2001, respectively.
- The number of people working in the social sciences, education, public service and religion increased from 6% in 2001 to 12% in 2006
- The number of people working in processing, manufacturing and utilities occupations dropped from 12% in 2001 to 7% in 2006
- 42% of workers in Town of Brome Lake work within the municipality, 20% work outside Town of Brome Lake but within the MRC of Brome-Missisquoi, and 38% work outside the MRC.

* statistics are taken from Statistics Canada 2006 Census

PRIORITY # 5

Town of Brome Lake will support sustainable local economic development.

ACTIONS	IN PLACE	TO COME
Continue to offer the Club Net service (low-cost public access to computers and internet at the Centre Lac-Brome)	X	
Participate in the process of revitalization of the downtown core ("Projet Fondation Rues principales")	X	
Support the development of the high-speed and wireless internet network across the territory		X
Begin a dialogue with local employers to better understand their workforce needs		X
With local employers and the Chamber of Commerce, explore opportunities for creating a single source of information and support for employment in Town of Brome Lake		X