

INTERVIEW OF THE MONTH

JEAN-ÉRIC TURCOTTE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, STRATÉGIES SAINT-LAURENT

On September 21, the organization Stratégies Saint-Laurent launched the Fonds d'action Saint-Laurent, an action fund aimed at promoting ecosystem conservation and maintaining the uses of the St. Lawrence River and Gulf of St. Lawrence by supporting projects to preserve, enhance and restore the River, educational projects and projects to increase awareness of St. Lawrence-related issues. This month, SODES presents an interview with Jean-Éric Turcotte, Executive Director of Stratégies Saint-Laurent.

Jean-Éric Turcotte has worked for Stratégies Saint-Laurent since 2008 and been its Executive Director since July 2011. He has been involved in the environmental associative movement for more than 20 years within various networks and organizations. Having studied Communications (Media Arts and Technology), Geography, Geomorphology and the Environment, Jean-Éric has close to 30 years' experience...20 in environment and 10 in teaching at the college level.



Mr. Turcotte, you recently officially launched the Fonds d'action Saint-Laurent. Could you explain what this project is all about?

The Fonds d'action Saint-Laurent (FASL) action fund is a tool that complements existing initiatives aimed at helping to carry out concrete action likely to help enhance, protect and restore the St. Lawrence River. It advocates supporting joint projects, engaging projects registered under the Ecological Remedial Action Plans (ERAPS) developed by the ZIP (priority intervention zone) committees and those associated with the future Regional Integrated Management Plans (RIMP). The FASL action fund will focus especially on projects developed, supported or referred by the territory's ZIP committees and will ultimately group together voluntary contributions from private foundations, industrial and commercial partners and individual donors with a common interest in safeguarding the St. Lawrence. The fund will target projects likely to help maintain or increase biodiversity and make it possible to support projects linked to uses, accessibility, awareness and education.

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How can the Québec marine industry contribute to the Fonds d'action Saint-Laurent and what advantages can companies derive from the fund?

Québec's development is due, in part, to the marine industry, which has significantly improved its practices in recent years through the implementation of internal management procedures and the vast majority of its members' endorsement of the Green Marine environmental program. The industry's environmental awareness has genuinely been raised, particularly in Québec and Canada.

However, as key users of the St. Lawrence, in keeping with the “user pays” principle, the industry can do even more, on a voluntary basis, to help maintain and even enhance the St. Lawrence’s natural heritage. The FASL is a real opportunity for partnership between the marine industry and the NPOs dedicated to safeguarding this immense heritage. Advantages for industry participants include improving their corporate image through the public’s improved perception of them, helping to maintain a healthy River and taking the opportunity to collaborate in truly sustainable development of the St. Lawrence.

On another point, in your opinion, what challenges will the marine industry face in the coming years?

Québec society is probably favourable to the marine industry’s development. However, the population is increasingly educated about and engaged with regard to issues related to the St. Lawrence. The number of users has tended to continue growing both on the River and along its banks. Quebeckers will be more demanding of the industry, which, as a result, will have to pursue its efforts aimed at improving its environment-related practices and be proactive and increasingly irreproachable in terms of transparency, participatory governance and integrated management. The marine industry will have to take account of the diversified interests and ecological and social uses of the communities living along or using this extraordinary transportation route, key ecosystem and heritage jewel.

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