



Stanstead resident fulfils dream
by donating land

Description

Pristine Molson Island added to protected lands in the Eastern Townships

December 1, 2021

Molson Island, the largest pristine island on **Lake Memphremagog**, is now protected, thanks to a donation from a local cottager. **Andrew Howick** recently donated the undeveloped 26-hectare island (equivalent to 24 soccer fields) to the **Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC)**. A businessman, family man and passionate about the nature on his island, Howick has spent decades pursuing his goal to protect this jewel in Lake Memphremagog.

Howick's donation to NCC is supported by the **Government of Canada's Ecological Gifts Program**, which provides tax benefits to individuals and corporations who donate ecologically sensitive land for conservation. The project also received funding from the **Government of Quebec's Projet de partenariat pour les milieux naturels (PPMN)**.



Molson Island – Image: Claude Duchaine

A man with a mission

Since the 1980s, Howick and his family have been enjoying the natural beauty of Molson Island from their cottage on Lake Memphremagog. When Howick and six of his neighbours learned in the early 1990s that the island was being eyed for development, they decided they had to do something about it. So, they rolled up their sleeves to contact the descendants of the Molson family and bought all the shares of the island from them. Over time, some neighbours sold their shares to Howick, who eventually became the sole owner.

“The Northern Green Mountains are one of the last remaining areas in southern Quebec where large tracts of wilderness are still relatively undisturbed. We must maintain untouched habitats such as Molson Island as testaments to the biodiversity of undisturbed areas. This opportunity wouldn’t be possible without generous donors like Andrew Howick and the commitment of the surrounding community.”

– Cynthia Patry, biologist and Project Manager for the Northern Green Mountains at the Nature Conservancy of Canada in Quebec

“I want to extend the original intent of conserving this jewel of nature by donating it to NCC. It’s my small contribution to future generations and to fighting climate change,” says Howick. “My kids and spouse fully support my decision. They value conserving the island, and I’m so proud of them for that. I hope that more people will learn about the Ecological Gifts program and choose to give their land or take whatever action they can to help conserve our environment.”



The largest undisturbed green jewel on Lake Memphremagog



Wood Duck – Image: Matthew McPhee

Molson Island joins Île Longue as an NCC-protected area in Lake Memphremagog, adding to the 150 square kilometres already protected in the **Northern Green Mountains region** by NCC and its partners. Entirely forested, the island boasts a variety of habitats, from rocky areas to riparian zones, and even a forested bog with a bed of moss. These natural spaces offer significant habitat potential for plants that are threatened or vulnerable in Quebec and Canada, as well as rare orchid species. Among the plants observed here are Appalachian sedge, formerly on the list of species likely to be designated as threatened or vulnerable, and bulblet bladder fern, an indicator of limestone soil.

“Environments like Molson Island are becoming increasingly rare in Quebec. I am pleased that Mr. Howick, a private landowner, sees the urgency of taking action to protect his island and is turning to NCC to help him in his efforts. We are proud to financially support and collaborate with NCC to help conserve natural environments on private land.”

– Benoit Charette, Minister of the Environment and the Fight against Climate Change

Acknowledgements

NCC thanks Andrew Howick for his donation of Molson Island and the Howick Foundation for its generous contribution of stewardship funds to maintain the land.

Thanks to the Government of Quebec, through the PPMN of the Minister of the Environment and the Fight against Climate Change, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (through its North American Wetlands Conservation Act) for funding all costs associated with the acquisition of this property.

Thanks to the contributions of other private donors to NCC stewardship funds, including donations made by members of the community around the lake, NCC can ensure the long-term protection of Molson Island and Île



Longue in Lake Memphremagog.

Feature image: courtesy of the Nature Conservancy of Canada

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The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is Canada's leading not-for-profit, private land conservation organization, working to protect our most important natural areas and the species they sustain. Since 1962, NCC and its partners have helped to protect 14 million hectares, coast to coast to coast, including 48,000 hectares in Quebec. To learn more, visit natureconservancy.ca



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