

Hedging bets on buckets of the sweet stuff

By Mary Fahey

With February's confusing weather and a chilly start to March, Mother Nature must soon deliver a sign: when, O Gaia, can we maple-slurping Canadians start to tap the bountiful maple trees?

That depends on whom you ask. Some commercial maple producers, like Ferme et Forêt owner Sean Butler, took full advantage of the mid-February mild spell and started collecting sap via a network of tubing connecting the some 2,500 trees on his property to his sugar shack to begin boiling the sweet stuff down for syrup. He tapped his trees in early to mid-February and finished up a week later, and now, when the much-anticipated spring thaw starts to come around, he'll be ready to keep collecting.

"It was such a mild winter and spring was looking very mild, so we decided to go for it," said Butler. "The season is a couple of weeks earlier this year."

Butler pulls in about one litre of sap per tap, and some of his bigger maples are tapped twice, so he can collect about 2,600 liters of sap in a season. Last year was a record season, so he's not expecting to create

as much syrup for this spring; yes, he's starting a bit earlier this year, but he won't really know how the season will go until it's over. He's hoping for as long a season as possible, obviously, but he doesn't want to jinx it – the seasoned maple-making vets, he said, know better than to try to guess.

"It all depends on the season. You want to have freezing at night and warm during the day, and keep that going for as long as possible," said Butler. "In a bad year, the season could be only two weeks, but in a good year, it could be six weeks."

Nathalie Martin at the Vignoble de Chelsea said they finished tapping their 900 trees in late February, and while they've started boiling some of their sap, the surprise cold snap temporarily suspended that operation. Everything is set up for the proper spring sap collection, she said, and they will likely collect sap all through March. But this year was a slower start than usual for the Vignoble, she said; last year they were earlier with sap collection, but last year was a remarkable season. Like Butler, she was cautious about making predictions about this season.

"I can't say. We depend on



Téó Butler, 5, and his dad Sean Butler hoist a bottle of the maple syrup they produce on their farm every spring. Photo Mary Fahey

by the weather; plenty of sap-collecting hobbyists aren't sure how to play this season either. John-David Hutchison in Chelsea probably won't tap his 18 maples until the end of March or early April. His guidepost for tapping is when the weather is 5C during the day and minus 5C at night on a consistent basis. But he doesn't sell his syrup, so he's not as invested in the length of the season.

"This is just a hobby. It's fun to do and you can do it on your own," said Hutchison. "The year I did it properly, I had enough maple syrup for a year... It's for Christmas gifts or whatever."

Simply preparing for the season is a lot of work, said Hutchison; getting all the taps in the trees and setting up buckets to collect is no easy feat. He wasn't ready for the warm weather when it hit, and he needs a string of nice days in order for his small operation to bear fruit.

"The hobbyists, I don't know if they were ready yet. Usually it will be the real spring, when real spring comes. So we got another two to three weeks before I'm going to think about it," said Hutchison. "Unless you were out last week, you missed your opportunity."

the weather and we never know. Last year was awesome, and this year, we don't know. We're just

waiting," said Martin.

Not only those commercial maple producers are confused



Municipalité de Chelsea Municipality

CANADA
PROVINCE DE QUÉBEC
DISTRICT DE HULL
MRC DES COLLINES-DE-L'OUTAOUAIS

AVIS DE PROMULGATION

AVIS PUBLIC est par la présente donné que le Conseil de la Municipalité de Chelsea a, à sa session tenue le 5 décembre 2016, adopté les deux (2) règlements suivant :

Règlement numéro 975-16 modifiant certaines dispositions au règlement de zonage numéro 636-05 – Dispositions relatives à la grille des spécifications de la zone IA-402

Règlement numéro 998-16 modifiant certaines dispositions au règlement de zonage numéro 636-05 – Dispositions concernant les zones exposées aux glissements de terrain

AVIS PUBLIC est également donnée que ces règlements sont déposés au bureau du directeur général / secrétaire-trésorier, sis au 100, chemin Old Chelsea, Chelsea (QC) J9B 1C1 où toute personne intéressée peut en prendre connaissance durant les heures d'ouverture des bureaux.

AVIS PUBLIC est aussi donnée que ces règlements ont été approuvé par :

1. Le Conseil municipal, le 5 décembre 2016
2. Le Conseil de la MRC des Collines-de-l'Outaouais, le 16 février 2017

AVIS est en outre donné que les règlements sont entrés en vigueur le 16 février 2017 en vertu du certificat de conformité émis à cette date par la MRC des Collines-de-l'Outaouais.

**DONNÉ À CHELSEA (QC)
ce 8e jour du mois de mars 2017.**

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Charles Ricard,
Directeur général / secrétaire-trésorier ~ Director General / Secretary-Treasurer

NOTICE OF PROMULGATION

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given that the Council of the Municipality of Chelsea, at a sitting held December 5, 2016, has adopted the following two (2) By-laws:

By-law Number 975-16 amending specific provisions of the Zoning By-law Number 636-05 – Provisions with respect to the specifications grid for the zone IA-402

By-law Number 998-16 amending specific provisions of the Zoning By-law Number 636-05 – Provisions regarding areas prone to landslides

PUBLIC NOTICE is also given that these By-laws are kept in the office of the Director General / Secretary-Treasurer, located at 100 Old Chelsea Road, Chelsea, QC, J9B 1C1 and are available for consultation by any interested party, during normal business hours.

PUBLIC NOTICE is also given that these By-laws have been approved by:

1. The Municipal Council on December 5, 2016
2. The Council of the MRC des Collines-de-l'Outaouais on February 16, 2017

NOTICE is further given that these By-laws have come into effect on February 16, 2017 pursuant to the certificate of conformity issued on this date by the MRC des Collines-de-l'Outaouais.

**GIVEN AT CHELSEA (QC)
on this 8th day of March 2017.**