

## The outdoors for all - SEPAQ's accessibility initiatives

### Presentation abstract

Québec is known for the vastness of its wild natural territories, as well as for its abundant, diverse, and impressive flora and fauna. For more than 30 years, the Société des établissements de plein air du Québec (Sépaq) has had the privilege of managing, developing, and showcasing these magnificent sites entrusted to it by the government of Québec.

Sépaq offers a wide range of activities (outdoor, hunting, fishing) and services (accommodations, restaurants, equipment rentals, shops), inviting a diverse clientele to enjoy all sorts of experiences in its national parks, wildlife reserves, and tourist establishments. Its mission is to make sure its establishments are accessible to the public, and to develop and protect these public facilities. More than ever, Sépaq wishes to connect people with nature.

Adhering to the Equal in every respect policy, Québec legislation designed to ensure that the rights of people with disabilities are exercised. Sépaq makes sure, through its investment projects, to render its customer-reception buildings accessible to people with disabilities.

#### A win-win partnership

To encourage the social participation of people with disabilities taking advantage of the tourism offer, Sépaq and Kéroul have collaborated over the years toward the common goal of universal accessibility. Sépaq has most notably tasked Kéroul with evaluating the accessibility of all Québec national parks while prioritizing those located around Montréal and Québec City. The example of Oka

Parc national d'Oka provides an excellent illustration of Sépaq's efforts in terms of universal accessibility. In 2012, it was awarded the Mention Kéroul to highlight the work of managers offering accessible services to persons with restricted physical ability. Since 2011, the park has offered traditional ready-to-camp sites adapted for persons with reduced mobility. Special amenities include adapted counters and tables, an access ramp, an adapted locking system for doors and windows, and an area for raised fires. Two Compact cabins, accessible by car all year long, also have these characteristics, in addition to an adapted bathroom. A number of buildings (washroom facilities, the Visitors Centre, the community hall, the terrace, and the general store) have been adapted to offer general access.

To get around the park, and thus take advantage of the activities and the beautiful scenery, our mobility-impaired clientele can borrow two types of equipment free of charge:

1. Hippocampe: enables access to Lac des Deux-Montagnes and hiking trails. During the winter, the addition of a ski under the front wheel makes winter hiking trails accessible as well.
2. Ski-Vel: equipped for wheelchair installation, thus providing access to winter hiking trails.

A number of discovery activities are easily accessible for people with reduced mobility, thus making it possible to discover the entire park without difficulty. A paved multi-use trail crosses a majestic pine-tree wooded area on the shore of Lac des Deux-Montagnes and provides access to the beach. And an adapted playground will enable tots to take advantage of the nice weather too. At other establishments

Sépaq is gradually implementing other measures to improve universal accessibility across its network, including an Action Plan for People with Disabilities. More generally, certain larger cabins have been redesigned to accommodate persons with reduced mobility.



Five national parks, in addition to Parc national d’Oka, are equipped with a Ski-Vel, which is accessible free of charge on request. Located at Parc national d’Aiguebelle, the self-guided wheelchair-accessible La Castorière discovery trail received the Kéroul special mention in 2002. Its Abijévis campground also has accessible campsites, as do 16 other parks of the network.

**Lead speaker :** John MacKay

**Organisation :** Société des établissements de plein air du Québec (SÉPAQ)

**City (Country) :** Quebec(Canada)

**Biography :** A graduate in engineering from Université Laval and member of the Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec (Quebec association of professional engineers), Mr. MacKay is also a graduate of Université Laval’s Collège des administrateurs de sociétés (corporate administrator’s college). He had a first successful career in consulting engineering, for 17 years. Subsequently, he went into the manufacturing sector as a business owner. His career led him to all continents where he developed a number of projects and networks. He worked at the Société d’habitation du Québec from 2007 to 2013, first as vice-president then as President and CEO. Subsequently, he served as vice-president at the Régie du bâtiment du Québec until his appointment to the board of directors and as President and CEO of Sépaq, in 2015.

**2nd speaker :**

**Organisation :**

**City (Country) :** ( )

**Biography :**