

Rousseau Woodland Frequently Asked Questions

History of the project

The Rousseau Woodland was made up of 46 parcels of land.

Following a citizen-led movement to protect the woodland from possible deforestation for housing construction by the owners, the Town mandated a third party, WSP, in order to carry out fauna and flora inventories of the woodland. The studies showed that the Rousseau Woods did indeed have significant ecological value that merited protection.

After adopting Bylaw 906 decreeing a maximum loan of \$4,300,000, the Town of Pincourt moved to consult the population to hear its position regarding this project and its financing over a 30-year period.

The Town of Pincourt, in order to respect the Government's Health and Safety Guidelines during the pandemic, therefore sought the written opinion of its citizens on this project by inviting them to submit their opposition to the acquisition of the lots by the Town. The consultation, which lasted just over the legally required 15 days, was announced on electronic bulletin boards, by e-mail alert (Info-P), on the website and by mail. Citizens had until November 9, 2020 to express their opposition.

Following the consultation and noting that there was not the legally required number of objections to hold a referendum, the borrowing by-law was sent to the Ministry for validation. It was not until 2021 that the government approved the borrowing By-law 906. The acquisition of the lots then took place throughout 2021.

As of October 27, 2021, the Town of Pincourt is pursuing the regulatory steps to finance the Rousseau Woodland buyout project.

Answers to frequently asked questions

1- Despite the two payment options, how come the deadline for full payment is so short?

Before the aforementioned letter could be sent, the Town had to have purchased all the land, which has only recently been completed.

2- Why not suggest three installments like the regular tax bill?

Seeing as the government has given us the deadline of December 2, 2021 for the loan application, we unfortunately could not offer this as an option.

3- Why a 5% interest rate?

This is a 30-year average (an estimate) suggested by the government. The Town will know the official interest rate for the first 5 years, following the opening of tenders on January 11, 2022. Note that the interest rate is set by the lending financial institution and predetermined for a period of 5 years. The interest rate set may be different from one year to the next.

4- Why are the numbers not identical to the first letter you sent?

We had to **average** the 5% interest rate as suggested by the government. **However, the amount you can pay in full today is less than what we had projected.** In addition, it has been clear from the start that the amounts are subject to change depending on actual interest rates and the cost of acquisition.

5- If I plan to sell my house, what is my most advantageous payment option?

In this case, the best option is to not pay the full tax for the woodland. Thus, you don't have to do anything. Your 2022 tax bill will include the annual amount due.

6- Do I have to make a payment now?

If you do not want to pay immediately, you don't have to do anything. Your 2022 tax bill will reflect the annual amount due.

7- Is the commercial sector also taxed?

Yes, any land, building or house has received the letter and must contribute to this project. In Pincourt, there are a total of 5,417 addresses. The letter was mailed in bulk.

8- What is the call for tenders to financial institutions, what does it mean in reality?

Once the borrowing by-law has been approved by the *Ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation*, the Town of Pincourt will legally have to submit the request for a loan to financial institutions through a call for tenders. Each institution will offer an interest rate and a contract so that the Town can choose the most economically advantageous offer.

9- How did the citizen vote in 2020 for the acquisition of the woodland work?

On October 23, 2020, a letter was sent to citizens explaining how to oppose the purchase the Rousseau woodlands. The law requires that anyone who is eligible to vote and who **disagrees with a proposed borrowing by-law may oppose it.** Thus, the letter targeted only to those who were against the purchase of the woodlands. **The legally required number of oppositions was 1,084 votes. The Town received 524 votes against the purchase of the Rousseau woodlands.**

10- Why not divide the amount equitably for the entire town, since the entire population benefits from this forest?

Residents living near the woodland are the ones who benefit the most from the forest, as they live close by. For example, residents of the Chêne-Bleu high school area will not notice any change. On the other hand, people living on Place Rousseau or Laflèche Street are assured of having a forest in their backyard, and not a residential project. People who live far from Rousseau woodland have a different view: why would I pay for a place I don't go to, if there are no municipal facilities there? Indeed, there are no municipal infrastructures there, because it is not a municipal park, it is a forest.

11- What happens if I refuse to pay this amount?

All residents will have an amount added to the tax bill of their home in 2022. The public has been consulted; the legal process has been followed. Every landowner or homeowner has a duty to contribute to the project. If left unpaid, this amount will show up as a debt on your account, with interest carried-on, and will be construed as a tax payment default.

12- What is the size of the woodland?

The Rousseau Forest has an area of 28,181.3 m² (303,338 ft²).

13- What is the contribution of the businesses in Pincourt in this matter?

All owners of land, businesses or homes in Pincourt will be required to contribute to the purchase of the woodlot. Commercial or residential, everyone has a legal duty to pay their share, whether they be in Taxation sector 1, Taxation sector 2 or the Overall Taxation sector.

All legal documents concerning the acquisition of the Rousseau woodlands are available on the Pincourt website (Citizen's Services/Environment/Rousseau Woodland).

Hard copies of this document are also available at Town Hall.

This document has been prepared in collaboration with Town Management, the Communication Department and the Financial and Administrative Department