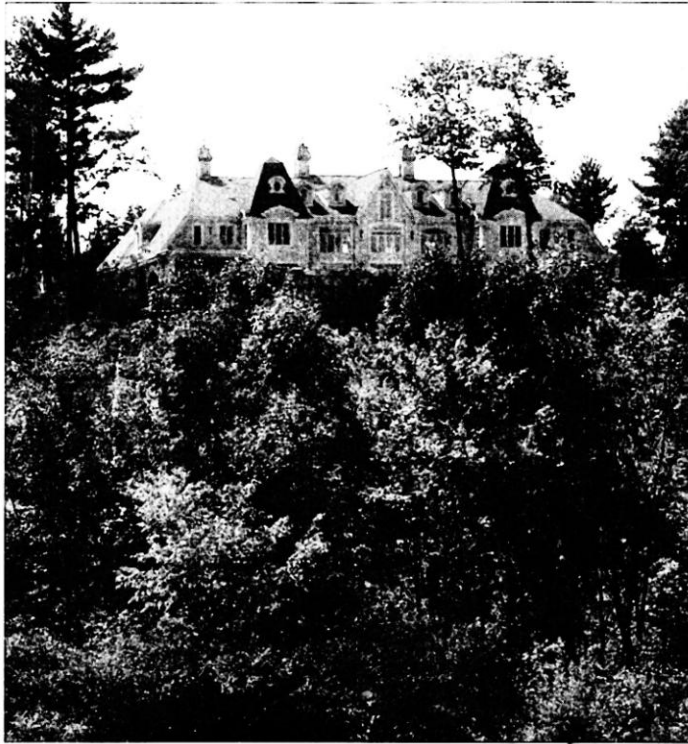


**“It’s not something that happens every day”**

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# Landslide risk minimal in Vaudreuil-Soulanges: Geologist



Urban Planning Director Nathalie Lavoie says the town of Hudson is going to include provisions for construction on an escarpment with a slope of more than 20 percent in their regulations. Residents will be required to obtain a report from an engineer before beginning construction.

(Gazette, Jim Duff)

by SHANNON-LEE FIGSBY  
reporter@hudsongazette.com

**HUDSON** — Despite the presence of Leda clay in our region, a landslide similar to that which claimed four lives in a rural Quebec town early last week is remote, say experts.

“According to the MRC Vaudreuil-Soulanges master plan we don’t have much of a risk here,” said Town of Hudson urban planning director Nathalie Lavoie. The MRCs across Quebec have land maps indicating the type of soil in each area, she explained, therefore identifying each town’s individual risk of experiencing a landslide.

“Basically the areas where the phenomenon exists is in the St. Lawrence lowlands and the Ottawa Valley,” explained Alain Liard, Director General of the Quebec Order of Geologists. “You are looking at areas where the subsoil is made up of clay deposits.”

Opponents of development along Hudson’s escarpments point to the presence of clay composed of prehistoric glacial silt as proof that the town runs a landslide risk.

In St. Judé, where a severe land-

slide claimed the lives of a family of four last Monday, the terrain was made up of a mix of clay, sand and water, making the area susceptible to slides and sinkholes. The fact that Hudson’s terrain is comprised mostly of yellow clay doesn’t ring any alarm bells for Liard, who told the *Hudson/St. Lazare Gazette* that he “sees no reason why yellow clay would make a reason any more susceptible to landslides.”

A factor that does increase the risk of a landslide occurring is deforestation, explains Liard.

“The moment you remove forest, you change the land’s surface drainage,” he said, “and you also remove some of the slope protection that trees provide, because the soil is more susceptible to erosion.”

Lavoie said there are specific provisions in place to make sure that Hudson residents don’t inadvertently increase their risk of experiencing a landslide on or around their property.

“For regulations regarding trees, [residents] have some setbacks at the top and bottom of escarpments,” she explained, “they can not cut any trees, and it’s the same in the escarpment itself because the trees are helping to keep the slope. So it’s not

possible to cut any trees or shrubs. Those are the kinds of regulations and rules we have in our by-laws. And we’re making sure that people don’t do anything foolish in their big escarpments.”

Having rules and regulations in place in a town’s by-law is one thing, but ensuring that residents respect the parameters of escarpment construction is another. Trail Grubert, Hudson’s director of technical services, concedes that some construction has taken place without proper consultation.

“You’re not supposed to go surcharging a whole bunch of extra weight on hillsides without a proper soil study being done,” he said, referring to one such case in the town’s west end, “That is an awful lot of weight being put on a soil when you don’t know what is going on underneath it. And there’s no trees left, which doesn’t help either.”

Lavoie said that Hudson has plans to make regulations concerning construction on escarpments even more stringent.

“We are putting a regulation in our zoning in regards to areas that

have slopes of more than 20 percent,” she explained. “We are going to make sure that they have a report from an engineer if they want to do anything. Basically, it’s not going to be possible to build something within an escarpment that has more than a 20 percent [slope].”

“If people are close to a steep slope, their risks are higher,” said Liard, “but there are some known factors that can trigger an event. Probably the biggest trigger factor other than general conditions is really something that triggers movement at the base of the slope.”

Liard explains that although landslides are considered natural disasters, there are contributing factors effected by man. But, he says, in 2007 the provincial government adopted a policy to try to minimize geo-hazards and natural hazards, so the issue has been in the government radar for some time.

Still, says Liard, the possibility of a landslide occurring in any region should not become a preoccupation for citizens.

“It’s just not something that happens everyday.”