

# Soulanges Canal backers wield political lever

by NICK MAYES and JIM DUFF

The \$160 million project to reopen the Soulanges canal is in Premier Jean Charest's hands, says l'Association des gens d'affaires de Soulanges (AGAS).

In a strongly worded resolution adopted unanimously at the business organization's Feb. 5 meeting, AGAS calls on the provincial Liberal government "to proceed without delay to concrete action leading to the complete reopening of the Soulanges Canal."

The resolution notes that AGAS has been working for 15 years toward this goal in concert with the Vaudreuil-Soulanges MRC and the four municipalities the canal crosses – Pointe-des-Cascades, Les Cèdres, Coteau-du-Lac and Les Coteaux – set up an inter-municipal board specifically to oversee the lobbying and other efforts required to reopen the historic waterway to recreational boating traffic.

Investors for canal-related projects are ready to jump in as soon as the work begins, the resolution notes, adding that the financial benefits will accrue to the entire region, including economically depressed Valleyfield.

At last Wednesday's news conference, members of the *Régie intermunicipale du canal de Soulanges* noted that every one of the feasibility studies commissioned to date have recommended that the project would bring a major boost to the region's tourism and recreational industries.

Last week's event also served notice that AGAS and the Régie's members will be pres-



Labourers at work in 1892 with teams of horses as they dig the Soulanges Canal.