

Soulanges Canal: massive model conveys the dream

by NICK MAYES

LES CÔTEAUX —“Seizing the opportunity: The canal will fulfill its promise as an international tourist lifestyle destination” reads a glossy brochure available at the Régie du canal’s offices.

The beautifully produced booklet is only part of the promotional material the committee has created to market the idea of constructing a huge pleasure boating facility along the historic 23-kilometre Soulanges Canal. The committee’s offices, housed in a converted mid-19th century jail, is home to an awe-inspiring scale model that shows, with extreme precision exactly what the project’s proponents have in mind.

The architects of this conceptual pleasure-craft port have incorporated buildings with restaurants, gift shops, discotheques housed in classically Quebecois buildings with high pitched roves, meandering boardwalks and multiple marina basins for mooring pleasure craft. The model, if only a concept, is very impressive and is illuminated with hundreds of tiny lights.

When the boardroom’s lights were turned out and the blinds drawn, it resembles something like a depiction of the Cote d’Azur on the St. Lawrence. “We have put a lot of thought into the design. The buildings along the waterfront will all be designed and built in the classic Quebec style,” Albert Daoust, Director of the Régie



The port of Valleyfield would see a marina and residential development complex designed for an upscale clientele.

du Canal’s offices explained last week.

The Régie du canal’s offices also house a glass cabinet containing artefacts retrieved from the silt at the bottom of the canal — small anchors, hand blown bottles, even something that looked like a bronze harpoon head.

“Like the Lachine Canal, this is a piece

of history, it had a lot to do with the creation of what used to be called Upper and Lower Canada,” Daoust explained. He’s adamant that the project, which would see the creation of the marina, renovation of the Soulange Canal and creation of what amounts to a new town on the banks of the river, is a viable and potentially lucrative

proposition.

“It’s an economic development project based on making the best out of the waterfront property we already have and you know what waterfront property is worth,” Daoust said.