



Conseil régional
de l'environnement
de Montréal

News Statement

January 16, 2003

“BOUT DE LA LIGNE” FOR MONTREAL’S LAST GREEN SPACES

Funding for Montreal’s new Green Space Plan on the ropes

The city’s budget adopted in December 2002 provides just crumbs for green space acquisition - \$1.5 million over the next 3 years – essentially **NO MONEY FOR GREEN SPACE PURCHASES**.

Quebec must ante-up for green space purchases

Green Coalition and CRE-Montreal spokespersons have urgently requested an immediate meeting with Quebec Environment Minister André Boisclair before the ‘Contrat de Ville’ between Quebec and Montreal is signed in the coming days. Reliable sources reveal that there is **NO MONEY FOR GREEN SPACE PURCHASES** in the Contrat! Spokespersons still want to focus the Minister’s attention on the desperate plight of Montreal’s last unprotected natural green spaces. Substantial core funding from Quebec, to be matched by the City of Montreal and bolstered by private funds is needed. An urgent request for a meeting was mailed in June by the Green Coalition. There has been no written reply to the June letter and other letters, only verbal promises.

Quebec must help to set up private funding mechanisms

The spokespersons also seek the government’s assistance in setting up funding vehicles based on U.S. models, such as Land trusts, green Conservation Bonds and a Loto vert to facilitate private fund-raising.

Green spaces disappearing Recent studies by Monsieur Boisclair’s own ministry show that Montreal’s last natural green spaces are in peril. According to new statistics, green spaces are disappearing at an alarming rate. Between 1986 and 1994, 50% of Montreal’s forested lands were built over; between 1994 and 2001, 567 hectares were lost to development and more since. Most of the green spaces are owned by developers, zoned and slated for development. At the present rate, in 10 to 15 years, all will be gone. Just 3.8% of Montreal’s territory is protected natural green space compared to the International and Quebec norm of 8%. But, the studies show that undeveloped portions of the Metropolis include ecologically valuable lands that, if acquired before they are gone forever, offer **the last chance to boost Montreal to the 8% benchmark or beyond**.

It's now or never. If Quebec and Montreal fail now to provide the needed Green Space dollars in the Contrat de Ville, in 5 years, the earliest time when the contrat could be renegotiated, if at all, it will be all up for Montreal's green spaces. **In 5 years most of the ecologically prized sites will be gone.**

No green space dollars from Quebec in 1989

Vigorous lobbying by Green Coalition volunteer member-groups persuaded the former Montreal Urban Community to adopt its \$200 million Green Space Program in 1989. That program ended when a Moratorium was imposed in 1992. One half the budget, \$100 million, was left unspent and many important sites left unprotected. Montreal's new Green Space Plan will require comparable investments taking into account the diminished buying power of today's dollar compared to 1992. Not one square foot has been saved in more than 10 years. Meanwhile our political leaders vacillate.

Token \$12.5 million invested by Quebec vs almost \$200 million by MUC 1979-1992

The Quebec Government was late, finally granting legal powers to the MUC to acquire and manage Nature-Parks in 1979. Other North-American cities had begun conservation action long before. The MUC made heroic catch-up efforts, investing close to \$200 million between 1979 and 1992 in the creation 9 large Nature-Parks (1,386 hectares). **The total sum contributed by the Quebec Government is \$12.5 million. A token and trifling sum invested back in 1979.**

The Quebec Government and the City of Montreal owe a significant debt to present and future generations of Montrealers to invest in the purchase the last portions of the New City's green heritage. The City of Montreal and the Quebec Government must act together to provide **GREEN SPACE DOLLARS in the Contrat de Ville now.**

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