

2006-09-06: The Chronicle

Montreal to swap local ecoterritory land with developer



West Island Green Coalition members (from left) Peter Graham, George Boutillier, Alison Hackney and Carmen Vrana at last Thursday's aggro meeting.

Montreal to swap local ecoterritory land with developer
BY ANDY BLATCHFORD

The Chronicle

Montreal's agglomeration council approved a controversial land swap last week, opening the door for a development project within the boundaries of a local ecoterritory.

Five hectares of city-owned land will be traded for 15 hectares of property owned by Groupe immobilier Grilli and \$700,000. All swapped lands are in Pierrefonds' Rapides du Cheval Blanc ecoterritory, which is nestled along Rivière des Prairies.

Montreal will give up a former city snow dump, a landfill and onetime agricultural field that has since overgrown. In exchange, the city will receive properties of higher ecological value, according to Helen Fotopulos, Montreal's executive committee member responsible for green spaces.

"The city renegotiated and in this new deal we are now saving the part of the 15 hectares that were buildable," she told reporters during a press conference before Thursday's agglomeration council meeting. Fotopulos was pleased with the deal and said the city plans to establish a 44-hectare nature park — which would be bigger than Lafontaine Park — in the ecoterritory.

But members of the Green Coalition, a local conservation group, say much of the land to be acquired in the exchange cannot be built upon. Many were in attendance during the meeting at Montreal City Hall.

"That land is in a floodplain and cannot be developed anyway," vice-president David Fletcher said. "There's no urgency for the city to be protecting that (site) other than to be vigilant and apply provincial laws as necessary."

The Roxboro resident said Grilli's plan to build hundreds of housing units, in multi-storey buildings, within Rapides du Cheval Blanc will be destructive to the ecosystem, which is home to vulnerable wildlife and flora. "The lady (Fotopulos) doesn't understand that a place like Rapides du Cheval Blanc needs to be left alone," he said.

The traded snow dump and landfill sites have been decontaminated, making them suitable for rehabilitation, Fletcher added.

During the meeting's public question period, Montreal Mayor Gérald Tremblay was asked by Green Coalition member Sylvia Oljemark about his administration's past promises to protect the island's few remaining green spaces. He said more than \$200 million is needed to preserve what's left, while the city is only able to allocate \$36 million.

"We realize that there's an impact and we're trying to do our best to honour that commitment," he said.

Earlier this year, the Green Coalition called on Montreal's ombudsman to review the swap to determine if it's legal under the city's own rules. They are awaiting her decision.

2006-09-06: The Suburban

Greens protest land swap at glomer

By Irene Chwalkowski, *The Suburban*

About 20 members of the Green Coalition attended last Thursday's agglomeration council meeting to protest a land swap deal between Grilli Construction and Montreal that will allow housing to be constructed in the western part of the Whitehorse Rapids ecoterritory.

The committee says the city violated its own commitment to democracy by passing the land swap without public consultation.

According to Helen Fotopoulos, councillor responsible for green space, the city traded five hectares of land that includes an old city snow dump, land fill and agricultural land gone wild, for 15 hectares of private land.

"We spent \$9 million for a value of \$20 million. We are now saving part of the land that could have been used for building [a buffer zone]. We will have a new park with three miles of shoreline — 44 hectares — about the size of Lafontaine Park," she said.

Green Coalition spokesperson Sylvia Oljemark said page 22 of the city's document released last May entitled "Current priorities of the policy on the protection and enhancement of natural habitats" shows how the city has cut their priorities in half.

It states: "We ultimately hope that the ecoterritory-based projects will help us achieve over half the 1,600 hectares set out in the Policy."

"Half of 1,600 is 800," Oljemark told *The Suburban*.

However, half an hour before the start of the agglomeration meeting where the deal was to be voted on, Fotopoulos denied the allegations made by the environmentalists — in e-mails garnering support for a protest at city hall — that the city was sacrificing 800 hectares of land on the island, a figure she said was pure fabrication.

"Allegations that were totally fallacious were made," Fotopoulos said.

"I can't help but react to statements that were made that are totally not true and to say otherwise is to be lead the population into total misrepresentation."

"Ecoterritories are not conservation parks," said ecoterritory project manager Daniel Hodder, who said there has been widespread confusion about this point. "We can't protect all the zones. They are large territories that have been identified — there are core zones that are surrounded by buffer zones and corridors that link together the cores zones like a rosary."

"We do not develop on shorelines. (Provincial and federal) law is such we have to retreat 10 metres from the shoreline," Fotopoulos said.

David Fletcher of the Green Coalition is concerned the city is going to pad their conservation figures with "bits and pieces of shoreline" when these areas are protected anyways.

The natural spaces policy targets eight percent of the island of Montreal to be protected. In the 25-plus years since the Montreal Urban Community was granted powers to conserve natural areas, only a little more than three percent of the Island of Montreal has been protected.

Since Mayor Gerald Tremblay promised the policy in May 2002, 0.2 percent of the Island (110 hectares in 2005) has been protected. This is the first land protected since 1992.

According to a list of commitments made by city officials held by the Green Coalition, on March 2, 2006, Fotopoulos promised six percent of the target in land ecoterritories and the remaining two percent in water ecoterritories.

Fotopoulos said during Thursday's question period that the city does not publicize which ecoterritories they are working on, for fear of losing leverage in land swap deals.



On the chopping block: The city has approved a land swap that will gut some of this greenspace in Pierrefonds.

Fotopoulos said work was also going on at Île Bizard, the western part of Pierrefonds, and the western part of Ste. Anne de Bellevue.

"We need to focus on the east end of Montreal which has been neglected for years. Hochelaga Maisonneuve needs to be re-greened. The east end needs clean air too. We have to plant trees — we set aside \$30 million for trees in Montreal.

"We're prioritizing where we will spend our money in areas with high ecological value. We're (making) a good deal. We'd rather keep our money," Fotopoulos said.

On August 1, the Green Coalition appealed to the Ombudsman of Montreal to examine the evidence that citizens' rights have been violated by a May 23, 2006 Montreal City council vote that approved the land exchange with no public consultation, permitting a large-scale residential development project at Whitehorse Rapids West.

The basis of the appeal is that the vote contradicts many of Montreal's policy directions, including the transport plan, the natural spaces policy, the tree policy and the Montreal Charter of Rights. They also allege there were irregularities in the procedures of the vote itself.

While Pierrefonds made its own deal with developers in the eastern section of the Whitehorse Rapids in 2000, any changes to established ecoterritories now have to go through the agglomeration council.

2006-09-06 10:50:13



IRENE CHWALKOWSKI/THE SUBURBAN

Greens at council: Only six got the floor at the agglomeration meeting last Thursday.

Extend question period, say Greens

By Irene Chwalkowski
The Suburban

Members of Montreal's Green Coalition say the agglomeration council's 30-minute question period is too short for citizens to have their input in the democratic process.

Only six out of the 21 people registered for questions at last Thursday's agglomeration council meeting had a chance to address councillors. The council puts a limit of three minutes for citizens to ask their first question, and about 30 seconds for a second, follow-up question. All six of the people who spoke during question period were members of the Green Coalition, which had about 30 members attend the meeting.

"I had to hire two people to take my place

at work," said Alison Hackney, an organic farmer from Senneville, one of the 15 people who did not get to ask a question.

"This is a scandal. It speaks to the lack of effectiveness of the agglomeration council. This shows that council is autocratic," said David Fletcher, spokesperson for the Green Coalition.

However, Pierrefonds borough mayor Monique Worth said members of the Green Coalition should respect democracy and allow more people to ask questions on different subjects.

"They take so long to ask their questions that they don't give anyone else a chance to speak," she said. "They have been there before and they just ask the same questions over and over again."

— With files from Jason Magder ■

2006-09-05: The Gazette

'The last bastions of green'

- Environmental groups express alarm as recent moves by Montreal's administration suggest that its recently-designated 'eco-territories' are far from safe from developers

MICHELLE LALONDE, The Gazette



Published: Tuesday, September 05, 2006

The trouble with giving something a name that suggests it has ecological value and should be preserved - like "provincial park" or "eco-territory" - is that people tend to become upset when condo projects start popping up in these places.

The Charest government learned this the hard way last spring when it announced plans to sell off parts of the Mount Orford provincial park so a developer could build luxury condos there.

And Montreal's administration was at pains again last week to explain to citizens why it can't keep major condo projects out of some of its recently designated "eco-territories."

On the agenda of last Thursday's agglomeration council meeting was a motion to take a large chunk of the Cheval Blanc Rapids eco-territory in Pierrefonds off a list of "areas or facilities of collective interest" for the region.

The motion was billed as a "technicality," necessary to legalize a vote by Montreal council last May that paves the way for a major condo project to be built on part of that eco-territory.

A group of residents and conservation group members showed up to protest and to question the council about the Cheval Blanc development. They also had queries about a virtual forest of high-rise housing towers going up on the south side of Nun's Island, in the Lachine Rapids eco-territory.

During the question period, Mayor Gerald Tremblay was asked how he could support these developments with his often-repeated promise regarding the protection of the island's few remaining green spaces.

The mayor has often publically deplored the fact that more than 1,000 hectares of forest, meadowlands and even wetlands have been taken over by developers on this island over the last 15 years.

With the catchy phrase "what is green will stay green," Tremblay has implied this de-greening process would not continue under his watch.

"I would like to qualify what I meant when I said 'What is green will stay green,' " the mayor said at the question period. "You know when I said that I was mentioning the mountain (Mount Royal), which is protected now by the Quebec government as a historical and patrimonial site. That's what I meant. We are doing our best to save as many green spaces as possible."

The Cheval Blanc motion passed. Now final approval of the condo project is in the hands of the Pierrefonds borough council, with a vote expected this month.

Tremblay said plans to increase the height and density of towers on Nun's Island are up to Verdun's borough council.

- - -

Members of Tremblay's administration have been struggling to explain the concept of "eco-territories" since December 2004, when Montreal city council adopted its new policy on the protection and enhancement of natural habitats.

The policy identified 10 new eco-territories, defined as areas of 15 hectares or more of undeveloped, natural green space of significant biodiversity. Much of the land in these eco-territories is currently owned by private developers and zoned for development.

Many assumed the city intended to buy or otherwise protect these lands, considering that about 94 per cent of the island has already been developed, covered with asphalt, buildings or landscaped city parks.

Only 3,000 hectares - six per cent of the land mass - remain untouched. These areas include mature

forests, marshlands, meadows and shorelines. They are home to many rare and endangered plants and animal species.

About half of what remains is already protected as nature parks, like Cap St. Jacques nature park, while most of the rest lies in what are now designated as eco-territories.

But the eco-territories, as Tremblay's team keeps trying to explain, are not inviolable. In fact, what the city's experts have been doing is analyzing the eco-territories to decide which parts of them are particularly ecologically sensitive and which parts could be developed without too much negative environmental impact.

They argue they simply don't have the budget to protect all of what's left. The city's green space acquisition budget is \$36 million over three years. So far, \$9 million has been spent to protect 110 hectares located in 11 different sites across the island.

Later this month, the council will vote on priorities for green space acquisition in the coming year.

The Green Coalition, a local conservation group, provoked the ire of Helen Fotopulos last week when it suggested in a media statement that the city intends to stand back while hundreds of hectares of eco-territories are bulldozed.

"These accusations are totally false," said Fotopulos, Montreal executive committee member responsible for green spaces.

In the case of Cheval Blanc, Fotopulos explained the city has renegotiated an agreement made between the old city of Pierrefonds and the developer and has gotten a better ecological deal. The city received 15 hectares of ecologically valuable land from the developer, she said, and ceded only five hectares of less valuable land.

"The five hectares in question is comprised of a former snow dump, some landfill and a small (former) farmer's field that has grown wild for the past few years," she said.

"It is not a natural milieu with high ecological value that we are exchanging.

"On the other hand, what we are acquiring will allow us to open the door to the creation of a linear park with three kilometres of coastline and 44 hectares (of land), which is bigger than Parc Lafontaine to give you an idea, for a nature park that will eventually be opened in this sector."

But the Green Coalition counters that 10 of the 15 hectares the city received from the developer is wetlands, so cannot be built on, anyway, because it is protected by provincial environment regulations.

They say the area to be developed is habitat to some rare species, such as the map turtle. And besides, they argue there is so little green space left on the island, all of it is valuable.

"These are the last bastions of green space on the island," said the Coalition's Sylvia Oljemark.

"These are the lungs of the Montreal region. We have problems with smog and air quality and global warming of the planet, and these natural green spaces provide us with means to mitigate pollution and offset these problems."

Both sides agree that the city's green space acquisition budget is not enough to save the eco-territories.

Both sides also agree that the province should step in to help. The Quebec environment department is still studying a proposal to give Montreal's eco-territories the equivalent of provincial park status.

The Green Coalition wants a moratorium on development in the eco-territories in general, and particularly in the Cheval Blanc Rapids area because the city's ombudsman is in the process of examining whether council ignored its own policies in approving the land swap.

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2006-09-05 : The Gazette

PARING O' THE GREEN

'Eco-territories' are under siege

MONTREAL, A6

TIGER SINKS SINGH

Fires 63 for fifth straight win

SPORTS, C1

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The Gazette

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2006-08-31: The Gazette

Land-swap deal goes to vote

CHERYL CORNACCHIA, The Gazette

Published: Thursday, August 31, 2006

The city agglomeration council is set to vote tonight on a controversial land-swap deal that paved the way for a residential development across from the Cheval Blanc rapids in Pierrefonds-Roxboro. The Green Coalition, which opposes the development of the waterfront land, is expected to stage a protest tonight.

Acting on complaints from the Green Coalition, Montreal ombudsman

Johanne Savard had been investigating how Grilli Immobilier Inc. acquired the waterfront land it is proposing to develop. Savard had said the land deal might be out of her jurisdiction, calling it "a complicated case."

The Green Coalition's complaints to the ombudsman's office hinge on alleged irregularities at the city of Montreal council meeting held May 2006.

At that meeting, the city approved a land swap in which Grilli was given Pierrefonds-Roxboro waterfront land that could be developed in exchange for non-buildable land nearby. The land is located just west of Riviera Place along the waterfront facing the Cheval Blanc rapids.

In effect, the city gave "a green light" to develop the Montreal's last remaining stretch of natural shoreline, said Al Hayek, president of the Green Coalition.

"Prior to the land swap, the city owned about two-thirds of the proposed building site," Hayek said. "Calculations based on the land-exchange documents show the city could have purchased the developer's portion of the building site for about \$700,000," he said.

Prior to tonight's expected vote, Grilli had been redrafting building plans after previous plans were sent back to the drawing board in July it was announced that a proposed commuter train station at Cheval Blanc would not be built.

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2006-08-31

Quelques questions qui ont été posées lors du Conseil d'Agglomération 31 août 2006

Question posée par Sylvia Oljemark

Question addressed to Mayor Gérald Tremblay
Agglomeration Council - August 31, 2006
Objet: Engagement politique du maire
Sylvia Oljemark, Coalition Verte

Question 1.

Monsieur le maire,

Back in May 2002, many citizens came to these chambers for the Montreal City Council meeting, to plead with you to save Montreal's last natural green spaces. In reply to my question at that time, Mayor Tremblay, you made a very noble commitment to all Montrealers. You said:

"I like the green spaces too!" And you stated that you were immediately **"lifting the 10-year-old Moratorium"** on green-space spending and you promised **"to create a new framework to protect the city's natural spaces."**

Many times since then, you have publicly deplored the neglect of the former Montreal Urban Community that led to the loss of 1,000 hectares of natural green spaces across the Island since 1990.

But, in just a week or two, your team will adopt new priorities for the Natural Spaces Policy. According to the new plans, the city is prepared to sacrifice approximately one-half the city's unprotected natural spaces to favour urban development - that is approximately 800 more hectares of green spaces to be covered by concrete and asphalt.

Mayor Tremblay, how do you reconcile the noble commitment you made to Montrealers in May 2002 to save Montreal's last natural green spaces with these new policy directions? Will you honour your earlier commitment?

Question 2.

Mayor Tremblay, we remember your early campaign slogan:

"What's green will stay green!" I reiterate my question, "Will you honour your commitment to save Montreal's last natural green spaces - including the Cheval-Blanc Ecoterritory?"

Question posée par David Fletcher

Question 1

Mr. Mayor, in response to a question I posed at the Agglomeration Council meeting of March 2, Mme Fotopoulos went on the record with a clear natural green space commitment.

She confirmed the target of 6% of Montreal's area in land ecoterritory and 2% in water ecoterritory would be met.

However, in September, the city will adopt new priorities for the Natural Spaces Policy that conflict with that commitment. The city intends to sacrifice many ecoterritory spaces of enormous ecological value, spaces that are home to important and rare animal and plant species.

Instead the city intends to pad the numbers with a patchwork of bits and pieces of natural space found in long established and already protected parks. While the protection of these is a laudable objective in its own right, it cannot be considered a substitute for, and, in any case, doesn't measure up to, the protection of natural lands truly and imminently at risk. Such substitution would be cheating the public and would amount to an empty, smoke and mirrors, PR exercise.

Will the original commitment, reiterated March 2, be honoured or not?

[refer to page 24 of the document "Habitats_naturels_bilan.pdf," http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/page/parcs_fr/media/documents/Habitats_naturels_bilan.pdf for question context]

Question 2

Rapide-de-Cheval-Blanc West is a valuable site with rare and important plant and animal species at risk. Their survival will be unquestionably compromised by the scale of development under consideration.

Due to extensive development, the east side has already been decimated on your watch since 2002.

Are you now going to allow the same to happen in the west of Rapide-de-Cheval-Blanc on land that already belongs to the public?

Question numéro 6 posée par Lewis Poulin

Résumé de la question numéro 6 de Lewis Poulin (514-684-3398) à la réunion du 31 août, 2006 conseil d'agglomération

Notez qu'une copie papier de partie 1 de la demande d'intervention de l'ombudsman a été donnée au conseil d'agglomération pour le record public (pour voir une copie de la demande à l'ombudsman, allez au site www.greencoalitionverte.ca, ensuite cliquez sur le bouton anglais, ensuite cliquez sur le lien issues afin de trouver le document : Part1of11_20060801_IntroQuestions1_10_OmbudsmanSubmission_ChevalBlanc.pdf

- Vu que la coalition verte a fait une demande d'intervention sans précédent à l'Ombudsman de Montréal cet été, 2006
- Vu que la Coalition Verte demande à l'ombudsman de renverser ou d'enquêter les irrégularités des événements qui ont servi à préparer le terrain pour un développement dans l'écoterritoire du Cheval Blanc
- Vu que l'enquête de l'Ombudsman n'est toujours pas terminée et clairement résolu
- Vu que l'item 42.07 de la réunion est lui aussi relié au développement dans l'écoterritoire des rapides du Cheval Blanc

Ne serait-il pas sage et prudent pour le conseil d'agglomération de Montréal :

- de permettre à l'ombudsman de terminer son enquête
- de reporter le vote concernant l'item 42.07 sur l'agenda à une réunion future
- d'exiger à tous les partenaires concernés dans le dossier du Rapide du Cheval Blanc d'attendre, eux aussi, que l'investigation de l'ombudsman soit terminée et résolue
- de réviser la possibilité de voter sur l'item 47.02 seulement après que l'ombudsman a complètement terminé son enquête et résolu les inquiétudes soulevées dans la demande d'intervention

Autres questions que j'aurais pu poser par la suite mais que je n'ai pas posées :

Est-ce que tous les conseillers du conseil d'agglomération ont pris connaissance de la demande de l'ombudsman? Il serait sage de reporter le vote 42.07

Est-ce que le maire Tremblay a pris pleine connaissance de la demande d'intervention faite à l'Ombudsman? Pourquoi donc ne pas reporter le vote sur l'item 42.07

Des questions qui n'ont pu être posées lors du CONSEIL D'AGGLOMÉRATION DE MONTRÉAL – le 31 août 2006

QUESTIONS POUR MME H. FOTOPULOS :

Citoyen : Susan Kiepprien (VAC) 514.620-3568 Pierrefonds-Montréal

Préambule : Mme Fotopulos, vous répétez constamment aux médias que la Ville de Montréal n'a pas d'argent pour l'achat de terrains dans les écoterritoires de l'île de Montréal. Aux Rapides du Cheval Blanc, secteur du Domaine des Berges, un cabinet d'évaluateurs a été retenu pour déterminer la valeur d'un terrain inondable à échanger contre un autre terrain à Montréal au montant de presque 3 Million \$, le tout en faveur du promoteur. Il est à noter que cette étude d'évaluation est confidentielle et impossible à obtenir. Plus récemment, du côté Ouest, des terrains construisibles appartenant à la Ville ont été cédés au promoteur pour un piètre 230 000\$ en échange de son terrain inutilisable *situé sous l'eau*.

Question : En dépit du fait que la Ville n'a pas d'argent, S.V.P., expliquez-nous pourquoi la Ville de Montréal cède nos terrains aux promoteurs à des prix dérisoires sans études d'évaluation par un professionnel indépendant alors que les promoteurs n'hésitent pas à se prévaloir d'évaluateurs qui travaillent en leur faveur?

Préambule 'follow-up' question: Mme Fotopulos, vous parlez souvent de votre souci de la qualité de l'air et vous déplorez les îlots de chaleur à Montréal. Malgré que vous admettez qu'un arbre doit avoir au moins vingt-cinq ans avant d'être efficace pour contrer la pollution, vous continuez toujours à parler du verdissement des toîts et de la plantation d'arbres pour aider les montréalais à combattre cette pollution et ces îlots de chaleur.

Selon la Direction de la Santé Publique de Montréal, l'an passé il y a eu plus de 1,500 décès prématurés à Montréal résultant de la pollution. Toutefois, vous êtes prête à détruire une grande partie de la forêt de l'Anse à l'Orme (désignée par Montréal en 2005 comme la forêt possédant la plus grande valeur écologique exceptionnelle de toutes les forêts sur l'île) pour y construire plus de 4,500 maisons. Ceci engendrera des milliers de voitures polluantes de plus sur les autoroutes les matins/soirs, pris dans un pain dans la congestion déjà existante. Toute cette pollution supplémentaire se retrouvera à Montréal et sûrement des centaines et des centaines, sinon des milliers, de décès de plus seront engendrés en conséquence de vos décisions.

Question : Au rythme actuel que vous détruisez nos forêts et boisés les plus importants, comment planifiez-vous protéger la santé des montréalais avec toute cette pollution à venir et où sont les études réalisées sur le trafic et la pollution avant d'entreprendre de si gros projets et comment pouvons-nous les consulter?

QUESTIONS de CARMEN VRANA - Pierrefonds, Montréal 421-3530

En 2003, le Service des parcs de Montréal a produit une étude de potentiel de parc régional sur l'écoterritoire des Rapides-du-cheval-blanc ouest *. Cette étude conclut que ce territoire est très riche en espèces végétales et animales rares ainsi que fragile; de plus, selon l'étude, il présente un potentiel unique d'une grande valeur écologique et il devrait être intégré aux milieux protégés.

*Copie de l'étude et photomontage disponible.

Question 1 : Comment se fait-il qu'en 2003 ce territoire devait être protégé et qu'en 2006 il est destiné à la construction?

Selon vos ententes avec le promoteur, pour acquérir trois terrains publics construisibles d'une superficie de 136,041.8 mètres carrés, le promoteur ne paiera qu'environ 230,000 \$. En échange, ce promoteur vous cédera son terrain inutilisable **situé sous l'eau** d'une superficie de seulement 53,248.8 mètres carrés et quelques petits lots déjà protégés pour la zone tampon.

Question 2 : Comment pouvez-vous justifier ce montant minime que vous demandez au promoteur et qui paiera pour les infrastructures?

* * *

Citoyen: Al Hayek (Notre-Dame-de-Grâces) 487-7685

- Dans la nouvelle Charte des droits et responsabilités, Montréal parle des valeurs d'ouverture, de respect, de transparence et de démocratie qui l'animent. Dans votre Politique de protection et de mise en valeur des milieux naturels, on peut lire que vous entendez poursuivre le dialogue avec les organismes environnementaux et les regroupements de citoyens intéressés par l'avenir de leurs milieux naturels.

Question 1: Mme Fotopulos, ce sont de très belles paroles. Toutefois, il y a eu de grands échanges de terrains aux Rapides du Cheval Blanc et ce, sans consulter les citoyens. Depuis 40 ans, les citoyens se battent pour la conservation de cette fenêtre naturelle sur la Rivière-des-Prairies. Pourquoi n'avez-vous pas consulté les citoyens à ce sujet et comment réconciliez-vous les politiques adoptées par votre administration avec le manque de considération accordé aux citoyens?

Question 2: Dans le Sommaire décisionnel il est écrit que la Ville devra payer 264,777\$ au promoteur pour l'acquisition de terrains aux Rapides-du-cheval-blanc. On aimerait savoir de quels terrains il s'agit, s.v.p.?

* * *

Sue Stacho – Roxboro Montréal 421-9713

Mme Fotopulos, vous parlez de la création d'un parc linéaire aux Rapides du Cheval Blanc. Selon vous et la mairesse Worth, ce parc sera constitué uniquement d'un sentier et d'une piste cyclable le long de la berge de la Rivière-des-Prairies. Toutefois, vous savez que 20% de ce que vous appelez 'un parc' est inondé une bonne partie de l'année et sera donc inutilisable.

Question 1 : Quand on connaît la définition du mot 'parc', comment justifiez-vous que ce sentier sera appelé un parc?

Mme Fotopulos, les citoyens ont travaillé fort à élargir et à nettoyer le sentier qui traverse l'écoterritoire du Cheval Blanc afin de le rendre accessible à tous. Nous vous invitons à vous joindre à nous samedi prochain, le 9 septembre à 10h pour une promenade-nature dans ce bel endroit. Venez voir pour vous-même pourquoi les citoyens y tiennent tellement à cœur.

Question 2 : Acceptez-vous notre invitation, Mme Fotopulos?

2006-08-31

Coalition Verte

Communiqué de presse pour diffusion immédiate

**Des citoyens protestent
La ville projette sacrifier les milieux naturels de Montréal
À l'écoterritoire des rapides du Cheval Blanc, les sacrifices sont déjà
commencés**

Date : jeudi 31 août, 2006 à 17h00

Lieu : Hôtel de ville de Montréal

Porte du côté ouest, Place Vauquelin

Les citoyens sont bouleversés et en colère. Lors de la période de questions au Conseil d'Agglomération le 31 août, les membres de la Coalition Verte et des amis incluant l'aile Jeunesse de la Coalition Verte nouvellement formée, manifesteront leur vive opposition aux nouveaux plans de la ville de Montréal qui signalent la perte de grandes parties des derniers milieux naturels non protégés sur l'île.

En septembre, la ville planifie l'adoption de nouvelles priorités à sa *Politique de protection et de mise en valeur des milieux naturels de Montréal*. Selon son *Bilan* de mai 2006, la ville se prépare à sacrifier approximativement la moitié (plus ou moins 800 hectares) des derniers milieux naturels non-protégés pour le développement urbain. D'est en ouest à travers la ville, des écosystèmes d'une biodiversité irremplaçable sont menacés comme jamais auparavant dans les 10 écoterritoires que la ville a identifiés dans sa politique.

À plusieurs occasions, le maire Gérald Tremblay a publiquement déploré l'abandon de l'ancienne Communauté urbaine de Montréal menant à la disparition de 1000 hectares de forêts de la métropole depuis la fin des années 80. L'équipe Tremblay est maintenant prête à approuver le sacrifice d'à peu près 800 hectares de plus en milieux naturels - c'est illogique, inacceptable et non-durable!

Indignation devant le vote sur le Cheval Blanc; des espaces verts publics échangés pour le profit d'intérêts privés.

Le vote au conseil de ville du 23 mai accordant l'approbation pour un échange de terrains à l'écoterritoire des Rapides du Cheval Blanc, permettant la construction d'un projet domiciliaire à grande échelle, indigné des montréalais qui se sentent bafoués dans l'expression de leurs droits démocratiques. Les citoyens revendiquent la protection des milieux naturels au Cheval Blanc depuis une quarantaine d'années. Mais l'échange de terrains accordant en contrepartie des espaces verts appartenant à la communauté au profit d'intérêts privés, lance l'énorme projet du Cheval Blanc Ouest sans aucune consultation publique antérieure.

Sauvons le secteur Cheval Blanc Ouest : le Cheval Blanc secteur Est déjà perdu

Sans se laisser décourager, les membres du **Comité pour la protection des espaces verts des Rapides-du-Cheval-Blanc**, un groupe-membre de la Coalition Verte, a organisé des visites-nature pour promouvoir la sauvegarde de tout le secteur Cheval Blanc Ouest. La majeure partie du secteur Cheval Blanc Est a été développée depuis 2002 sous la garde du maire Tremblay.

Changement climatique et réchauffement de la planète : les espaces verts essentiels

Les montréalais comprennent que les espaces verts en milieu urbain diminuent les effets de la pollution sur l'air, le sol et l'eau; que les forêts et milieux humides ont une influence modératrice sur la température ambiante et ont un effet compensatoire sur les changements climatiques; que les milieux naturels réduisent le smog et les gaz à effet de serre. En bref, les citoyens comprennent que les espaces verts à Montréal sont les poumons de la métropole et que leur préservation est essentielle pour le développement durable et d'une importance capitale pour faire face aux défis du changement climatique.

Un leadership politique responsable requis

Lors des 25 années depuis que la Communauté urbaine de Montréal a obtenu le mandat de préserver les milieux naturels, seulement un peu plus de 3% de l'île de Montréal a été protégé. Les normes internationales sont à 12%. Depuis quelques années, la participation du public est ignorée. Par exemple, après trois mois et la participation de 300 personnes à des audiences publiques d'un bout à l'autre de la ville sur la politique des milieux naturels en 2004, il y eut consensus. Mais les recommandations principales de l'Office de consultation publique de Montréal furent balayées du revers de la main. Cela incluait un appel pour que Meadowbrook soit un écoterritoire : et des appels pour un moratoire sur toute construction dans les milieux naturels et leurs zones tampon dans les écoterritoires. Le 31 août, les membres de la Coalition Verte réclament un véritable leadership politique et des gestes concrets pour préserver les derniers milieux naturels à Montréal. Avec déjà plus de 90% de l'Île couverte de béton et d'asphalte, Montréal n'a plus le temps ni les milieux naturels à gaspiller!

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**Green Coalition
News Release
for immediate release**

**Citizens protest: City plans to sacrifice Montreal's natural green spaces
At Rapides du Cheval Blanc Ecoterritory, the sacrifices have already begun**

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006 at 5:00 pm

**Place: Montreal City Hall
West Door, Place Vauquelin**

Citizens are upset and angry. At the Agglomeration Council Question Period August 31, Green Coalition members and supporters, including the newly formed Green Coalition Youth will voice their opposition to the City of Montreal's new plans that signal the loss of large portions of the Island's last unprotected natural green spaces.

In September, the city plans to adopt new priorities for its Natural Spaces Policy, the *Politique de protection et de mise en valeur des milieux naturels de Montréal*. According to its May 2006 *Bilan*, the city is prepared to sacrifice approximately one-half (about 800 hectares) of the Island's last unprotected natural spaces to urban development. From east to west across the city, ecosystems of irreplaceable biodiversity are at risk as never before in the 10 'ecoterritories' that the city has identified in its policy.

On many occasions, Mayor Gérald Tremblay has publicly deplored the neglect of the former Montreal Urban Community that led to 1,000 hectares of forests being stripped from the metropolis since the late 1980s. Now the Tremblay Team is poised to approve the sacrifice of approximately 800 more hectares of natural green spaces – this is illogical, unacceptable and unsustainable!

Outrage over Cheval Blanc vote; publicly-owned green spaces traded for private profit

The vote at city council on May 23 to approve a land-swap at Rapides du Cheval Blanc Ecoterritory permitting the construction of a large-scale residential project has outraged Montrealers who feel their democratic rights are being trampled. Citizens have called for the conservation of the natural spaces at Cheval Blanc for 40 years. But the land-swap trades away publicly-owned green spaces for private profit, setting in motion the huge project at Cheval Blanc West without any prior public consultation whatsoever.

Save Cheval Blanc West: Cheval Blanc East lost

Undaunted, members of **Le Comité pour la protection des espaces verts des Rapides-du-Cheval-Blanc**, a Coalition member-group, have mounted Saturday nature-tours throughout the summer to promote saving all of Cheval Blanc West. Most of Cheval Blanc East has been developed since 2002 under Mayor Tremblay's watch.

Climate change and global warming: green spaces essential

Montrealers understand that urban green spaces mitigate the effects of pollution on air, soil and water; that forests and wetlands moderate ambient temperatures and offset climate change; that natural spaces reduce smog and greenhouse gases. In short, citizens understand that Montreal's green spaces are the lungs of the Metropolis and that their conservation is essential to sustainable development and central to meeting climate change challenges.

Responsible political leadership needed

In the 25 years since the Montreal Urban Community was granted powers to conserve natural areas, only a little more than 3% of the Island of Montreal has been protected. International norms are at 12%. In recent years, public input has been ignored. For example, after 3 months and with 300 participants at hearings across the city on the Natural Spaces Policy in 2004, a consensus was reached. But the main recommendations of the Office de consultation publique de Montréal were brushed aside. These included calls for Meadowbrook to be an ecoterritory; and calls for a moratorium on all construction in the natural spaces and their buffer zones in the ecoterritories. On August 31, Green Coalition members seek real political leadership and action to save Montreal's last natural green spaces. With more than 90% of the Island already covered with concrete and asphalt, Montreal has no more time and no more natural areas to squander!

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