

\$15 billion for mass transit: McKay

By Irene Chwalkowski, The Suburban West Island News 2007-03-21

During a visit to Angell Woods Monday, Green Party leader Scott McKay said that a vote for the Green Party will send a clear strong message to the next prime minister that voters want action on environmental issues.

“The government is allowing development without any coherence and without a conscience,” McKay said.

Another issue was the need for improved public transport.

McKay said the Green Party would invest \$15 billion to develop mass transit in Montreal, financed by \$2 tolls on bridges that would generate \$500 million a year.

“Three quarters of the \$500 million would go towards mass transit,” he said, adding that it would be spent on electrical tramways.

“Quebec is a world leader in electrical transportation systems thanks to Bombardier, which exports electrical systems all over the world. Quebec has the store, but our shelves are empty,” he said.

On the national question, McKay said the future of Quebec should not be in the hands of political parties, but lies with the people.

“In this election, sovereignty is clearly not an issue. If Boisclair comes in, he will be too weak to hold a referendum.

“Let’s talk about the real things,” he said.

“We rally both sovereignists and federalists that want to act (on the environment).”

Green Party candidate for the Jacques Cartier riding, Ryan Young, accompanied McKay and told reporters that the protection of greenspace is a central issue for the West Island.

“Montreal is dead last among Canadian cities when it comes to protecting our green heritage,” Young said.

“This is our last chance,” said Young.

“West Islanders really value their natural spaces. I remember as a boy, when I was 12 to 14, I used to tramp through these woods and birdwatch in areas that just don’t exist anymore.

“Angell Woods is one of the most beautiful forests on the island of Montreal. There are 100 and 200-year-old trees,” he said.

“There is also a lot of biodiversity because we are in Southern Quebec. This is home to the brown snake, which is very rare, and wild leek (ail de bois).”

The borough of Pierrefonds/Roxboro borough has ambitious plans to push residential development west of the Cap St. Jacques nature park and into the Anse à l’Orme ecoterritory.

Initially planned were 6,000 residential units, a figure that has since been lowered due to the outcry from local environmentalists, who last year successfully blocked the opening of a road into the area.

The road would have cut the ecoterritory in half, a move the Green Coalition says would effectively destroy wildlife habitat.

“A freeze on development in Ste. Anne de Bellevue and western Pierrefonds would be the solution,” Young said.

This would give the provincial government time to provide funds to the city of Montreal so that they could buy the greenspace outright and preserve it. Another solution would be swapping land that is ecologically sensitive for land where development would not have an impact on greenspace.

Earlier on Monday, Geoff Kelley told The Suburban that the responsibility for saving natural spaces lies with the city of Montreal.

“We certainly share the vision of (former Minister of the Environment) Thomas Mulcair,” Kelley said, referring to a plan that involved linking up the Angell Woods and the Anse à l’Orme ecoterritory to create a green corridor.

“We already have Cap St. Jacques in Nelligan,” said Kelley, which he indicated was a good start.

McKay said that preserving the area would not be complicated.

“It would take just the stroke of a pen to save the natural spaces,” he said.