



## **News Release**

for immediate release

### **COUNCILLOR ZAMPINO VISITS WESTERN CHEVAL-BLANC SHORELINE**

### **GRASS-ROOTS HOPES ARE UP FOR A VIRAGE VERT AT CITY HALL – THAT COUNCILLOR ZAMPINO WILL RELENT - PUT GREEN SPACE DOLLARS IN HIS NEW BUDGET**

On Thursday, November 13, Councillor Frank Zampino, President of the megacity's powerful executive committee, responsible for Finance, joined citizens for a visit to the vast shoreline tract along the Rapides-du-Cheval-Blanc on Rivière-des-Prairies in Pierrefonds. The ecologically rich shoreline lowlands and forested land that teems with wildlife, is bounded by Riviera Street to the east, the Îles-Laval to the west and the CN line to the south. Considerable controversy surrounds the site, Montreal's largest remaining undeveloped shoreline. A history of public clamour to have this waterfront land preserved goes back to the 1960s. With the boom in residential construction, pressures are mounting to develop the land.

#### **Councillor Zampino buoys hopes for saving natural spaces**

Mr. Zampino graciously accepted the invitation extended by Olivia Wickhueller at the October council question period on behalf of Le comité pour la préservation du secteur des Rapides-du-Cheval-Blanc, a member-group of the Green Coalition. Mr. Zampino's visit has boosted the hopes and flagging spirits of green space advocates that he will relent and open the city's purse strings to provide funds in his budget for the new Natural Spaces Policy. The policy could save endangered natural spaces like Cheval Blanc West. Until now, Mr. Zampino has stated that there are many priorities in his upcoming budget, clearly signalling that funding for green space protection is not one of them!

#### **An important first step, boasts City Hall**

Through the summer of 2002, the comité vigorously defended the Cheval-Blanc green space to the east of Riviera that was threatened by a massive residential development. The issue focused City Hall's attention on the green space crisis and served to fast-track the new conservation policy. "The City of Montreal takes the first step of its Natural Spaces Policy" trumpeted city officials in April 2003. A land swap would save a strip of Cheval-Blanc shoreline property, eliminating the construction of two ten storey towers on the riverbank. Most of the construction project farther inland proceeded. The compromise, while not ideal, was hailed as a green space victory. (Activists wanted the entire site saved.) On April 28, Councillor Alan DeSousa said, "Now that the Cheval-Blanc issue is resolved, we will proceed with the same vigour to put our policy into action to protect natural spaces all across the Island of Montreal." But the long-promised policy, ready to roll since late summer 2002, has not been adopted! Without funding, it is at a dead stop.

### **When will the next step be taken, Mayor Tremblay**

In a hard-hitting letter to Mayor Gérald Tremblay made public last week, the Green Coalition chastised the mayor and, by implication the executive committee, for breaking promises to protect Montreal's last natural spaces. The credibility of the mayor was called into question for promoting the shaping of Montreal as a Sustainable Development City, (most laudably) while at the same time, he dooms the city's natural heritage to extinction through inaction. Without its natural spaces, Montreal can never be recognized as a Sustainable Development City by the international community nor take its place as a World Class City.

### **One half of Montreal's natural spaces is in danger of being lost in the near future**

Recent Quebec government studies show that approximately one half of Montreal's natural green space (1600 hectares) is in peril. Natural sites across the city's territory are owned by developers and are zoned for development. Development pressures are so severe that these unprotected green spaces are at risk of disappearing completely in the near future. The other half of the city's natural spaces (1614 hectares) is "protected" within the limits of the Nature-Parks.

### **Even the Nature-Parks are endangered**

Unbelievably, current Nature-Park statutes are so weak that portions of nature-parks (if not whole parks) can be leased, sold or rezoned! Such amputations of the parks have already happened or have been fought off by citizen action. And now a 'spaghetti network' of new roads threatens established Nature-Parks and other green spaces in the West Island.

**Le comité pour la préservation du secteur des Rapides-du-Cheval-Blanc and the Green Coalition hope and trust that Councillor Zampino's Cheval-Blanc visit signals a true virage vert at City Hall!**

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