



News Release

for immediate release

CITIZENS ASK “WHERE’S THE MONEY” FOR GREENSPACE PURCHASES?

Date: Thursday, June 20, 2002 - 7:00 p.m. – Question Period

Place: Montreal City Hall
275 Notre-Dame Street East

Note: Green Coalition spokespersons will meet journalists
after Question Period.

FATAL FLAW IN SUMMIT PROCESS SOUNDS THE DEATH KNELL OF MONTREAL’S LAST GREEN SPACES

Montreal Summit participants were permitted to shape the text of policies that will guide the New City. But the citizens were told there was no discussion on budgets. The pitiful sum of \$25 million, to be matched by Quebec (maybe) for green space acquisition over 10 years, was pre-determined by bureaucrats behind closed doors with no public input. Sadly, the otherwise visionary process was hijacked by the bureaucrats. This fatal flaw sounds the death knell of Montreal’s last green spaces, lands that are owned by developers and zoned for development – rampant, relentless development. Between 1986 and 1994, 50% of Montreal’s forested lands were built over; between 1994 and 2001, 567 hectares were lost and more since. Within 15 years all will be gone.

Green Coalition’s David Fletcher was granted just 90 seconds before the assembled dignitaries at the Summit Plenary to make his impassioned plea that there is an urgent need to invest a minimum of \$200 million to acquire Montreal’s last irreplaceable green spaces.

Mayor Tremblay and Councillor DeSousa need the tools

May 27, 2002, Green Coalition and Conseil régional de l’environnement de Montréal rallied citizens for Council question period to call upon Mayor Gérald Tremblay to save the green spaces. The Mayor’s response that he was lifting the 10 year old Moratorium on acquisition and that he, along with Councillor Alan DeSousa, would create a new framework to protect green space delighted the two coalitions. But the Mayor and Mr. DeSousa need the tools for the job. The pittance dictated by the bureaucrats, even matched by Quebec (which is far from certain) is woefully insufficient for their task.

Generations of neglect

Mayor Tremblay cannot create “Une Ville Mondiale” without protecting its green space. The New City has inherited an appalling green space deficit from generations of neglect. Just 3.8% of Montreal’s territory is protected natural green space compared to the International and Quebec norm of 8%. The Quebec Government was late, finally granting legal powers to the Montreal Urban Community 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). **But in all the years since 1979, the total sum contributed by the Quebec Government is \$12.5 million.**

All is not lost!

New studies by Environment Quebec show that portions of our beautiful island Metropolis are not yet built on (3180 ha) – including ecologically valuable lands that, if acquired before they are gone forever, offer the last chance to boost Montreal to the 8% benchmark.

Quebec owes a big debt to Montrealers to purchase and conserve the City’s green heritage

All that is needed is cold, hard cash. However uncertain it is that the new Fiscal Pact will become a reality, it is certain that the Quebec Government owes a significant debt to present and future generations of Montrealers to purchase and conserve the last portions of the New City’s precious green heritage. Failure to provide the needed funds now will mean that these lands will soon built over and this Island will be Asphalt-City.

Contacts: David Fletcher 683-7864
 Sylvia Oljemark 332-9146