



News Release

for immediate release

GREEN COALITION MOBILIZES CITIZENS TO CITY HALL: CRISIS FOR MONTREAL'S LAST GREEN SPACES

Date: Monday, November 24, 2003 at 6:30 p.m

Place: Montreal City Hall

West Door, Place Vauquelin

Note: Green Coalition spokespersons will meet journalists between 5:00 and 7:00 p.m.

Ordinary citizens, green spaces defenders, are upset and angry. They want Mayor Gérald Tremblay to honour his promise that he has reiterated so many times to save Montreal's last natural green spaces. They want dedicated funds for the protection of our natural spaces to be included in the new budget when it is tabled on November 27. Above all, they demand action now to save the green spaces.

Instead, Councillor Frank Zampino has stated more than once that there are many priorities in his new budget, but that funding for green space is not one of them! At the October 27 question period, Councillor Alan De Sousa, responsible for sustainable development, pronounced that his "Natural Spaces Policy", promised since May 2002, was ready for take-off - like a great aircraft. But that there was no fuel - no money.

Why are people concerned enough to head to city hall? What green space crisis?

ONE HALF OF MONTREAL'S NATURAL SPACES IS IN DANGER OF BEING LOST IN THE NEAR FUTURE

The scope of Montreal's green space crisis cannot be overstated. More than 85% of Montreal has been developed. Just 3.3% of the city's territory is protected natural green space compared to the International and Quebec norm of 8%. Recent Quebec government studies show that approximately one half of Montreal's remaining natural green spaces (1600 hectares) is in peril - forests, old farmlands 'en friche', marshlands, creeks and shorelines. These natural sites 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 - THE OTHER HALF!

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.

THE LONG WAIT FOR ACTION IS NOT ACCEPTABLE

Apart from the land swap in April 2003 to protect a shoreline strip along the Rapides-du-Cheval-Blanc in Pierrefonds, there has been no acquisition of natural sites for conservation in Montreal for eleven and a half years! With the boom in residential construction, pressures are mounting to develop the remaining green spaces; more lands of great ecological value are disappearing every day. **This is not Sustainable Development!**

It is not acceptable to community activists that Montreal's green heritage is abandoned – prey to developers' bulldozers – through the neglect and inaction of our political leaders. Citizens will no longer wait. **Our green spaces cannot wait!**

Contacts:

Green Coalition:

David Fletcher 683-7864

Sylvia Oljemark 332-9146

NEWS FLASH:

Schoolchildren's Petition

Mrs. Sue Stacho, a young mother, will arrive at City Hall hands laden with offerings from very young Montrealers. Letters, tributes and gifts of drawings and paintings from 100 children are addressed to Mayor Tremblay appealing to him to save their forests!

Meet some of the children and Mrs. Stacho on Monday!

Sue Stacho 421-9713