



## News Statement for immediate release

### Open Letter to Mayor Tremblay

May 30, 2005

Mayor Gérald Tremblay  
Montreal City Hall

#### **RE: Disaster at Rivière-à-l'Orme Ecoforest Corridor – bulldozers coming**

Seven hectares of ecologically valuable land has been added to the Nature-Park in Ile-Bizard. A good step forward, but your help is needed at Rivière-à-l'Orme! Back in 1989, Green Coalition member groups persuaded the Montreal Urban Community to adopt its \$200 million Green Space Program, but the program collapsed in 1992. One-half the budget was left unspent and the job was left half done. Since those days, more than 1,000 hectares of forests have been stripped from the Island and now just 3% of Montreal's territory is protected natural green space. The City of Montreal plans to boost this dismal quota to 8% as outlined in the new *Politique de protection et de mise en valeur des milieux naturels*, an admirable objective. But a mere 0.3% of the city's annual budget – and just for 3 years - has been set aside for the purpose. Development pressures continue to mount, threatening many of the “ecoterritories”. Most crushing now is the pressure on the Rivière-à-l'Orme Ecoforest Corridor. Within weeks, bulldozers will be at work in this ecoterritory.

**New Policy fails to save Forest rated #1** Members of the Green Coalition have been attending Pierrefonds/Senneville borough council meetings regularly. They have been hearing, at one council meeting after another, that the “Antoine-Faucon” housing project will carve into the “forêt centenaire” and its wetlands in the Rivière-à-l'Orme Ecoterritory. The magnificent old-growth forest is part of the Anse-à-l'Orme Forest considered by the former MUC to be *the* #1 forest in ecological quality on the Island of Montreal. The citizens (voters) feel doubly dismayed and betrayed that the City of Montreal will contribute to the extension of Antoine-Faucon Boulevard enabling the construction in the forest *using taxpayers' dollars!* Estimates in Pierrefonds' Plan Triennal d'Immobilisation peg the costs of this part of the extension at \$2,450,000. According to the city's own polls, Montrealers are overwhelmingly in favour of preserving natural spaces, even if it means paying more taxes. Their tax dollars must not be spent to destroy a unique natural site.

**Roads to cut up Ecoterritory** Later, Antoine-Faucon Boulevard is slated to cut across the ecoterritory from south to north, ending at Gouin Boulevard. And a major artery, Pierrefonds Boulevard, is to extend westward through the Corridor, through rare forest, beaver marsh, deer yards and the river course. Because of the configuration of the L-shaped ecocorridor and the curving road, the highway would traverse the greenbelt not once but twice. To complete these two boulevards will cost Montrealers many more millions: other roads and more housing developments will inexorably follow. Costs to this exceptional natural area are immeasurable: these projects signal the end for the ecoterritory's survival.

**Building projects are incompatible with the objectives of the Natural Spaces Policy.** So few natural green spaces are left in Montreal (mostly owned by developers) that quotas can only be boosted to about 6% if all the last green spaces are saved. It is unconscionable and incoherent, and incompatible with the new Natural Spaces Policy, for the City to promote the destruction of the forêt centenaire. The City must not squander this top quality natural space. Without the road the Faucon project cannot proceed! Mayor Tremblay, the Green Coalition asks you to refuse to spend taxpayers' dollars for roads or building projects in any of the ecoterritories, and to follow the Office de consultation publique de Montréal's recommendation, namely "*.....to reduce current pressures on certain areas targeted by the policy, the Commission recognizes the necessity of imposing a moratorium on all development projects in the ecoterritories natural spaces and buffer zones.*" (communiqué OCPM)

**Green spaces are needed to validate Montreal's Sustainable Development claims.** Please note that traffic on Antoine-Faucon boulevard is already fierce. New houses in the ecoterritory will not be on bus lines. One or more cars per household can be expected – adding between 6,000 and 16,000 vehicles to West Island roads. Please remember your commitment to the Kyoto accord! Also remember your vision of Montreal as a sustainable development city. Without sufficient natural green spaces to maintain indigenous biodiversity, our city can never take its place on the world stage as a sustainable development city. The world standard for natural space conservation is no longer 8% but 12% and rising. Green Coalition members remember your campaign slogan - "What's green will stay green"!

**The City of Montreal must press the superior governments for help.** On May 9, MNA Yolande James and Minister for Native Affairs, Geoffrey Kelley were the guests of the Green Coalition for a visit to the forêt centenaire. The visit was part of ongoing lobbying efforts to stimulate the participation of the superior levels of government in saving Montreal's last natural spaces. The Coalition continues to press both the Federal and Québec governments for additional funds and collaboration on landbanking and swapping schemes. Citizens expect that the city is also pressing these keys!

**Minister's Park could protect natural spaces; hold off construction.** Thomas J. Mulcair, Minister for Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks, is studying the creation of Lake of Two Mountains National Park. As proposed by the Green Coalition, it would encompass Paul Sauvé Park, and the shoreline milieux of Oka, Hudson, Vaudreuil, Dorion, Île Perrot and the Islets. The plan would also include protection of the Lake itself and, in a first for Québec, extend National Park status to at least two natural areas on the Island of Montreal – Cap-Saint-Jacques and the **Rivière-à-l'Orme Ecoforest Corridor**. A decision on the park is promised for September. The Faucon project must not be permitted to cut a significant and critical swath from the Rivière-à-l'Orme Ecoterritory before the National Park can come to fruition.

Mayor Tremblay, the grassroots are distressed that building plans are also underway for many other ecoterritories, at **Les rapides du Cheval Blanc, at Les rapides de Lachine, Le corridor écoforestier de l'Île Bizard and on Le Mont-Royal**. And in the east-end, so deprived for green space, Autoroute 25 and Bridge to Laval threatens **La coulée verte du ruisseau De Montigny and its off-shore islands**. Please turn the rhetoric on "Sustainable Development" into concerted action to save the last natural spaces on Montreal Island!

Sincerely,  
Green Coalition Inc