



## News Release for immediate release

### **Citizens protest: City plans to sacrifice Montreal's natural green spaces At Rapides du Cheval Blanc Ecoterritory, the sacrifices have already begun**

**Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006 at 5:00 pm**

**Place: Montreal City Hall  
West Door, Place Vauquelin**

Citizens are upset and angry. At the Agglomeration Council Question Period August 31, Green Coalition members and supporters, including the newly formed Green Coalition Youth will voice their opposition to the City of Montreal's new plans that signal the loss of large portions of the Island's last unprotected natural green spaces.

In September, the city plans to adopt new priorities for its Natural Spaces Policy, the *Politique de protection et de mise en valeur des milieux naturels de Montréal*. According to its May 2006 *Bilan*, the city is prepared to sacrifice approximately one-half (about 800 hectares) of the Island's last unprotected natural spaces to urban development. From east to west across the city, ecosystems of irreplaceable biodiversity are at risk as never before in the 10 'ecoterritories' that the city has identified in its policy.

On many occasions, Mayor Gérald Tremblay has publicly deplored the neglect of the former Montreal Urban Community that led to 1,000 hectares of forests being stripped from the metropolis since the late 1980s. Now the Tremblay Team is poised to approve the sacrifice of approximately 800 more hectares of natural green spaces – this is illogical, unacceptable and unsustainable!

#### **Outrage over Cheval Blanc vote; publicly-owned green spaces traded for private profit**

The vote at city council on May 23 to approve a land-swap at Rapides du Cheval Blanc Ecoterritory permitting the construction of a large-scale residential project has outraged Montrealers who feel their democratic rights are being trampled. Citizens have called for the conservation of the natural spaces at Cheval Blanc for 40 years. But the land-swap trades away publicly-owned green spaces for private profit, setting in motion the huge project at Cheval Blanc West without any prior public consultation whatsoever.

#### **Save Cheval Blanc West: Cheval Blanc East lost**

Undaunted, members of **Le Comité pour la protection des espaces verts des Rapides-du-Cheval-Blanc**, a Coalition member-group, have mounted Saturday nature-tours throughout the summer to promote saving all of Cheval Blanc West. Most of Cheval Blanc East has been developed since 2002 under Mayor Tremblay's watch.

### **Climate change and global warming: green spaces essential**

Montrealers understand that urban green spaces mitigate the effects of pollution on air, soil and water; that forests and wetlands moderate ambient temperatures and offset climate change; that natural spaces reduce smog and greenhouse gases. In short, citizens understand that Montreal's green spaces are the lungs of the Metropolis and that their conservation is essential to sustainable development and central to meeting climate change challenges.

### **Responsible political leadership needed**

In the 25 years since the Montreal Urban Community was granted powers to conserve natural areas, only a little more than 3% of the Island of Montreal has been protected. International norms are at 12%. In recent years, public input has been ignored. For example, after 3 months and with 300 participants at hearings across the city on the Natural Spaces Policy in 2004, a consensus was reached. But the main recommendations of the Office de consultation publique de Montréal were brushed aside. These included calls for Meadowbrook to be an ecoterritory; and calls for a moratorium on all construction in the natural spaces and their buffer zones in the ecoterritories. On August 31, Green Coalition members seek real political leadership and action to save Montreal's last natural green spaces. With more than 90% of the Island already covered with concrete and asphalt, Montreal has no more time and no more natural areas to squander!

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