

Land-swap deal goes to vote

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The city agglomeration council is set to vote tonight on a controversial land-swap deal that paved the way for a residential development across from the Cheval Blanc rapids in Pierrefonds-Roxboro. The Green Coalition, which opposes the development of the waterfront land, is expected to stage a protest tonight.

Acting on complaints from the Green Coalition, Montreal ombudsman

Johanne Savard had been investigating how Grilli Immobilier Inc. acquired the waterfront land it is proposing to develop. Savard had said the land deal might be out of her jurisdiction, calling it "a complicated case."

The Green Coalition's complaints to the ombudsman's office hinge on alleged irregularities at the city of Montreal council meeting held May 2006.

At that meeting, the city approved a land swap in which Grilli was given Pierrefonds-Roxboro waterfront land that could be developed in exchange for non-buildable land nearby. The land is located just west of Riviera Place along the waterfront facing the Cheval Blanc rapids.

In effect, the city gave "a green light" to develop the Montreal's last remaining stretch of natural shoreline, said Al Hayek, president of the Green Coalition.

"Prior to the land swap, the city owned about two-thirds of the proposed building site," Hayek said. "Calculations based on the land-exchange documents show the city could have purchased the developer's portion of the building site for about \$700,000," he said.

Prior to tonight's expected vote, Grilli had been redrafting building plans after previous plans were sent back to the drawing board in July it was announced that a proposed commuter train station at Cheval Blanc would not be built.

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