



Press Statement

Open Letter to Mayor Tremblay

Greens to Mayor Tremblay: “We want action, not promises!”

September 8, 2004

Mayor Gérald Tremblay

At the August 23 Council meeting, you renewed your pledge to save the natural green spaces of our Island Metropolis, reassuring the long line of concerned citizens who approached the microphone one after the other during question period. You promised that the long-delayed Natural Spaces Protection Policy will be adopted in October and that before year's end \$12 million would be invested for green space acquisition - the first installment of the \$36 million over 3 years earmarked for the purpose.

Rumours and missing millions:

Mayor Tremblay, only action now instead of promises can dispel the persistent rumours that are undermining your credibility. Some Tremblay Team officials say the administration is backing away from implementing the Policy that is designed to protect eco-systems or écoterritoires from east to west across the city. The quota of protected parkland would be boosted to 8% of the territory - up from the dismal 3.3% that is currently protected. But, these officials are insisting that demerging boroughs, by way of punishment, must forfeit their green spaces. Troubling too are reports from reliable sources that the \$12 million budgeted for green spaces in 2004 has shrunk to just \$7 million, the funds siphoned off for other purposes including sewers.

Demergers - no excuse for foot-dragging: City's Mandate is Island-wide

The City of Montreal has inherited the legal and moral responsibility from the former Montreal Urban Community to protect the region's natural green spaces. Even though a number of boroughs have voted to demerge from the megacity, some of them having important and endangered natural spaces within their borders, your mandate remains the same, to be the regional arbiter for green space protection - Island-wide! The mandate will remain unchanged until January 2006 when demergers take effect and not until then will your green space duty be transferred to the Agglomeration Council. All boroughs, demerging or not, have paid into the \$36 million green space fund and will continue to contribute for island-wide services - post-demerger!

Montreal – the “Sustainable Development City” - a joke?

City officials continue to tout Montreal as a world-class city – a “Sustainable Development City.” To earn the title, the City must first comply with rigorous international standards. Pivotal among the requirements are the conservation of natural spaces and protection of indigenous

biodiversity. So, the City must first save its natural ecosystems. Only then will it validate its claims and be able to take its place on the world stage as a truly Sustainable Development City.

Time's running out for natural spaces: There will never be another green space plan

Unchecked, construction has stripped 1,000 hectares of forested lands from the metropolis since the late 1980s - the city has had no green space program for over 12 years. With 90% of the territory already developed and with the housing boom, valuable biomass is being torn from the city landscape daily. Developers are exerting pressure as never before; they want to build in the last "écoterritoires". And the city acquiesces! Even established Nature-Parks are threatened by encroachment and road-building. Flood-plain maps continue to be redrawn to accommodate development in sensitive zones that have important flood risks. If the political will to protect the last of our natural heritage is squandered now, there will never be another green space plan. The natural spaces will be long gone before there is the political momentum ever again.

Put a construction freeze on écoterritoires – OCPM: Add more écoterritoires

The Office de consultation publique de Montréal held well-attended hearings on the Natural Spaces Policy in all corners of the city in April and May. In its report, the OCPM, like the Green Coalition, urges the city to act quickly to implement the plan. The Office recommends adding Meadowbrook and offshore islands, bringing the number of protected écoterritoires to 12. Urgent attention is called for Angell Woods - now. *"Moreover, 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) The City does not favour a Moratorium. Please reconsider: this tactic could gain time until the policy kicks in and additional funding is secured.

All the tools are in place: All that is needed is action!

The OCPM emphasized that the Natural Spaces Policy is eagerly awaited by the populace and that citizens are willing to participate on the project. Indeed the City's own polls show that 96% of citizens favour such a policy. These findings bolster and justify your mandate. You have estimated that investments of between \$100 and \$200 million are needed to save the green spaces for posterity. Taking the upper estimate of \$200 million amortized over 20 years at 6%, the investment required from each Montreal Island resident per year would be under \$10, less than the price of a pizza!

An appeal

Mayor Tremblay, the Green Coalition encourages you to honour your promises. Fully exercising your mandate to protect the green environment Island-wide will enhance your stature and the stature of our City.

We have opened a dialogue with Federal Cabinet ministers re "innovative" Green Coalition proposals that can help save the natural spaces. We are to meet Quebec Environment Minister Thomas Mulcair next week. Member-groups are confident that Mr. Mulcair can play a pivotal role in settling Montreal's green space crisis before it is irreversible. May we meet you soon to facilitate and coordinate these efforts?

Sincerely,
Green Coalition Inc