



News Release for immediate release

**Le Comité pour la protection des espaces verts des Rapides-du-Cheval-Blanc and the
Green Coalition**

Grand Opening of Cheval Blanc West Nature-Trail

Saturday, September 9 10:00-12:30

All welcome - Rain or Shine!

Cheval Blanc waterfront green space is great peril - last chance to visit!

**Directions: Follow Boulevard des Sources north to the end, then west (left) on Riverdale St.,
north (right) on Riviera St. to Park des Rapides-du-Cheval-Blanc**

On September 9, the public is invited to visit the Rapides du Cheval Blanc Ecoterritory and to enjoy the woodlands and marshlands, the shoreline and its stunning river views. The Cheval-Blanc Committee and the Green Coalition are promoting the conservation of all of Cheval Blanc West. Citizen volunteers will lead tours along the nature-trail through the ecoterritory so that residents may see for themselves the treasure they are in danger of losing forever.

Most of Cheval Blanc East has been developed since 2002 under Mayor Tremblay's watch. Now, the city is pressing forward to carve a major portion from Cheval Blanc West for a large-scale residential development. The future of the ecological integrity of this rare waterfront green space is in danger. *"Citizens' support is essential,"* commented Green Coalition President Al Hayek, *"to prevent this disaster."*

Background info:

Over the past few years, Montreal's municipal government has acted as if the Island's unprotected green spaces were inexhaustible. This is why only about 3% of the Island has been protected.

The vocation of the Rapides du Cheval Blanc Ecoterritory as parkland has long been recognized by residents and citizens have called for its conservation for the past forty years. With its vistas on Rivière des Prairies, its tranquility and rural character, it is ideal for satisfying the needs of a growing population with leisure time and needs for outdoor exercise and relaxation.

Even the City of Montreal, in a recent study, calls this site one of the most interesting natural areas still available, with a biological diversity greater than Mount Royal. The study also notes that the area is ecologically fragile. Therefore, it is inexcusable that the Tremblay Administration, without any prior public consultation whatsoever, has approved a land-swap, setting the large residential project for

Cheval Blanc West in motion. The only truly protected area that will be left is the portion where flooding makes construction illegal.

Tremblay Administration makes a mockery of Participatory Democracy

On August 31, at the Agglomeration Council Question Period, Green Coalition members and supporters, including the newly formed Green Coalition Youth registered to voice their opposition to the city's new plans that signal the loss of large portions of the Island's last natural spaces. And they planned to protest the sacrifice of Cheval Blanc West ecoterritory land for private profit. **Note:** According to its *May 2006 Bilan (Page 22): Politique de protection et de mise en valeur des milieux naturels de Montréal*, the city is prepared to sacrifice approximately one-half (about 800 hectares) of the Island's last unprotected ecoterritory green spaces to urban development.

But citizens were turned away on August 31

Of the 21 persons registered for question period only 6 were heard. All the rest, including the Youth reps were not permitted to pose their questions. This is yet another example of citizen input being brushed aside in recent years. Despite much rhetoric and the adoption of policies to embody commitments to transparency, to public consultation and to democratic process, the Tremblay Team commitments are proving to be meaningless.

The Ombudsman should be permitted to complete her task

On August 1, the Green Coalition submitted an extensive appeal to the Ombudsman of Montreal to investigate the legitimacy of various actions to permit the massive construction project at Cheval Blanc without prior public consultation. The Ombudsman should be permitted to complete her task before any further steps are made by the city in this case. Instead, the Agglomeration Council proceeded with its vote to further clinch the Cheval Blanc deal on August 31. The Green Coalition eagerly awaits the verdict of the Ombudsman of Montreal.

To read the Green Coalition Submission to the Ombudsman and more than 100 documents that support the submission, please visit the website:

<http://www.greencoalitionverte.ca/english.htm>

Journalists are particularly welcome on September 9, to discover what the controversy is all about and to learn why citizens are defending green spaces like Cheval Blanc. Photo ops are superb!

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