

News Release

for immediate release

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More than forty Partners of the Montreal Archipelago Ecological Park launch project to create a vast new park

Montréal, October 1, 2007 For the first time ever, 42 groups of citizens from across the region are banding together to protect the last natural spaces in a vast conservation zone. The goal is a new national park, the *Montreal Archipelago Ecological Park*, to save the remnants of the unique maple-hickory forest domain ('domaine de l'érablière à caryer') in south-western Québec. Today, park partners send an urgent call to all levels of government to support the park project and to ensure that *a minimum of 12%* of the ecological domain is protected in perpetuity. This domain is rich in species and spaces found nowhere else in Québec; it has the greatest biodiversity in all of Québec. The partners call for political action now to protect this natural heritage that is the most seriously threatened by urban development.

From Mirabel to the US border – from Suroit to Sorel

For decades, conservation efforts in the region have had limited success. Now that so many groups are working in partnership to shape the vision of a new national park, this initiative is gathering real momentum. So far, some 100 major sites have been identified for the target zone, located within a radius of approximately 50 km, centred on Montreal Island. **A unique new concept for the new park:** a mosaic of forests and floodplains, wetlands, natural corridors and islands that are linked together by the great rivers that criss-cross south-western Québec ('le Québec méridional') will be consolidated in a vast conservation zone, protected in perpetuity - *The Montreal Archipelago Ecological Park*.

Quebec's Metropolis off the pace set by other Canadian cities

Montreal is judged to be last of fourteen Canadian cities for per capita green space. Just a little more than 3% of Montreal Island is protected natural space. Laval has conserved only 0.73% of its territory; Montérégie, 3.69%. In Suroit and Mirabel-Blainville, population growth has surged more than 30% in the last 5 years, increasing development sprawl in the eco-domain. By contrast, Toronto has protected its ravine ecosystem, a program begun in 1954 and, in 2005, Ontario set up a 720,000 hectare Green Belt for that city. Thirty years ago, British Columbia set aside about five million hectares to protect agricultural land and preserve green belts. The Green Belt in and around Vancouver is lauded as a land-use model across North America.

Québec and Canada must honour binding treaty obligations

Citizens fear that their local environments are being rapidly degraded; they fear global climate change; they fear for the future of their children and grandchildren. They demand that the Federal and Québec governments fulfill their legal obligations under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, signed in 1992, during the tenure of Jean Charest as federal environment minister. This treaty was also endorsed by the Québec National Assembly. Binding obligations require the governments to reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity, to address the major threats to biodiversity, including habitat change, to maintain ecosystem integrity, etc. The creation of the *Montreal Archipelago Ecological Park* is a good place to start meeting these international obligations.

Just the beginning! Other groups are invited to be partners in this exciting and challenging project!

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Les partenaires du Parc Écologique de l'Archipel de Montréal – le 1 octobre 2007

Approche-Nature de Montréal

Association Arboretum Morgan

Association des Citoyens Perrotdamois

Association pour la protection du boisé Ste-Dorothée

Association for the protection of Angell Woods

Association pour la santé environnementale les hypersensibilités et les allergies du Québec

Centre d'écologie urbaine de Montréal

Centre d'information sur l'environnement de Longueuil

Citoyens pour une qualité de vie

Citoyens pour le Bois Franc

Coalition Verte

Comité des citoyens pour l'aménagement du boisé Saint-Sulpice

Comité écologique du Grand Montréal

Comité environnement des citoyens de Dorval

Comité Environnement les Moulins

Comité Pour la Préservation du secteur des Rapides de Cheval Blanc

Comité pour la protection du patrimoine - Île des Soeurs

Comité pour un environnement sain à Roxboro/DDO

Corporation pour la mise en valeur du bois de l'Équerre

CRE de Laval

CRE de la Montérégie

CRE de Montréal

Éco-Nature, Parc de la Rivière-des-Mille-Îles

Environ Mille-Îles

Environnement Nature Boucherville

Fondation Rivières

Front Vert

Jeunesse Coalition Verte

La Cour Calixa Lavallé

Lake Ashton Land Owners Association

Le regroupement de citoyens de Saraguay inc. (1987)

Les amis de Meadowbrook

Les sentiers verts de l'ouest de l'île

Regroupement environnemental Jérômien

Regroupement pour le jardinage écologique de Longueuil

Sauvons nos boisés et milieux humides

Sierra Club du Canada, Section du Québec

Société d'Histoire de Pointe-Saint-Charles.

SOS Dorval

SOS Planète

Union Pour les Droits de la Nature

Vac - Pierrefonds - Vigilance Action Citoyens