

Montreal's Green Space Story: Past and Present

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Objective

Community involvement in the movement to save green spaces in Montreal has a long and rich history. Starting in the late 1970s activists have been fighting to preserve remnants of Montreal's natural legacy. This section tracks the development of the Green Coalition, the leading community organization in this movement from its inception to its current activities. It also serves as a brief introduction to the history of green space conservation on the Island.

The final chapter of Montreal's green space story is almost at an end. This writing is being done during the December holiday period in 2002, a brief hiatus in the grass-roots struggle to protect the city's remaining natural green spaces. Though the outcome of the story is unknown, it is certain to be swift and final, because if the citizens fail to change political inertia into action in the coming months, time will have run out for Montreal's last green spaces. The following account outlines the current status of the struggle and traces the evolution of the efforts, involving thousands of citizens, through the years.

One year ago, on January 1, 2002, a new city was born. The City of Montreal was freshly minted as a merged city with a newly elected administration led by Mayor Gérald Tremblay. The Summit of Montreal that unfolded through April, May and June was visionary. Participants at the forum, a citizens' forum - one thousand strong - were invited to draft policies to guide the new administration, to craft a course for the City of Montreal to take its place as one of the great cities of the world. There were heady hopes for shaping the Montreal of the future on sustainable development principles.

But, how can our brave New City aspire to be a world-class city with just a piteous amount of protected natural green space? To the casual observer, Montreal is a charming Island Metropolis graced by its verdant mountain and large parks dotted east and west. The West Island appears particularly lush with Nature-Parks and green spaces. The reality is different. Startling satellite images, produced by the former Montreal Urban Community in July 1988, showed that the depletion of the vegetation cover on Montreal's territory had, even then, reached and passed the critical point. According to new statistics

from Quebec's Environment Ministry, green spaces are disappearing at an alarming rate. Between 1986 and 1994, 50% of Montreal's forested lands were built over; between 1994 and 2001, 750 hectares were lost to rampant, relentless development and the losses continue. And, what of the swaths of green space that still exist in West Island? Most are owned by developers, zoned and slated for development. Within 5 years, most of the ecologically prized sites will be gone.

The Environment Ministry studies show that sixteen hundred (1600) hectares of Montreal's natural green spaces are in peril - forests, old farmlands '*en friche*', marshlands, creeks and shorelines. If these 1600 irreplaceable hectares (to put that in perspective, Mount Royal Park covers 200 hectares) are cut from the urban landscape, the beauty of our Island Metropolis as we know it today will be scarred forever. More than 85% of Montreal has already been developed¹. Just 3.3% of Montreal's territory is protected natural green space compared to the International and Quebec norm of 8%.

The New City has one last chance to redress Montreal's appalling and growing green space deficit that it has inherited from generations of neglect. If all 1600 undeveloped green space hectares are protected, 6% of the territory can be conserved. Adding in strips of shorelines (*bande riverainè*) and borders of inland water courses for protection can boost Montreal closer to the 8% benchmark. We are the last generation that can balance Montreal's green space deficit, so grass-roots activists are mounting eleventh hour efforts to save Montreal's natural heritage. At press conferences, at city hall question periods, through letters, petitions and special events, the Green Coalition constantly is pressing the city council to adopt a new program to protect these ecologically valuable sites - now.

Green spaces are at greater risk than ever before

The scope of Montreal's green space crisis cannot be overstated. When cities are stacked up one against another, per capita green space is a principal quality of life component that is considered. Montreal just doesn't measure up. In a study by the National Post in October 2002, in a field of fourteen Canadian cities, Montreal was dead last for green space quotas². Vital green space biomass serves to offset the effects of urban pollution on air, soil and water. Green spaces provide recreational potential for the physical and mental well-being of citizens, but, in Montreal, development pressures are so severe that even established Nature-Parks are endangered. On May 10, 2002 green space defenders were stunned by Henry Aubin's front-page news in "The Gazette" that revealed that new road building threatened to mangle and destroy established and successful West Island Nature-

¹ Ville de Montreal, Province du Quebec; *Contrat de ville 2003-2007*; January 28, 2003

² Anne-Marie Owens and Mary Vallis; *The Intangibles that Define a Community*; National Post October 17, 2002

Parks and other green spaces³. A planning map, dated June 2001, by the *Ministère des Transports* and five former West Island municipalities, that shows a complex network of proposed roads and autoroutes cutting through the green spaces. The road network was soon dubbed the 'Spaghetti Network' by the environmentalists. Now citizens are not only fighting for the last green spaces, but are engaged in rear guard action to protect the established Nature-Parks that are menaced by new roads - Bois-de-Liesse and its Bois-Franc Forest, L'Anse-à-l'Orme and Sainte-Anne's Forest, Bois-de-l'Île-Bizard and Pointe Théorêt at Cap-Saint-Jacques. Unprotected green space like Angell Woods in Beaconsfield also face the new menace.

As Montreal's natural spaces teeter on the brink of extinction, it is useful to look back at the substantial history of local green space activism. How did Montreal end up with a green space deficit and what has been done to mitigate it? Demands to protect the green spaces are not new, and have garnered considerable support from both municipal and provincial levels of government at different times. The issue has spurred the greatest consistent community participation in Montreal's history. Since the 1970s, Montrealers have demonstrated their desire to protect the city's natural heritage. The public will is clear and should be seriously considered in broader discussions of the health and future of Montreal.

A Look Back

*Increasing development
and spreading asphalt*

Nineteenth century Montrealers were passionate about their parks. Neighbourhood parks and public squares abounded and the city's pride, Mount Royal Park, was created in 1876. As the city grew through the early twentieth century, many parks were built over and Montrealers lost the political will to protect green space. It was not until the Montreal Urban Community came into being in 1970 that conservation possibilities were considered.

Early in its tenure, the MUC identified parklands suitable for regional parks, but lacked the legal powers to implement the plans. At about the same time, other significant circumstances began to shape future events. Real Estate developers, having the forethought that our political class did not, had begun buying up tracts of vacant land. Over the next fifteen years or so, the Grilli Corporation acquired almost all the undeveloped land in West Island. The Quebec *Ministère des Transports* was also purchasing swaths of land and establishing rights of way for future roads like the 440 Autoroute - in the interim unintentionally creating green corridors for flora and fauna so cherished by environmentalists. And some urban planner envisioned a major new artery, parallel to and roughly mid-way between Gouin

³ Henry Aubin; "Paving a West Island Vision" ; The Montreal Gazette, May 10, 2002

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Boulevard and the Trans-Canada Highway. The proposed artery was called de Salaberry Boulevard - a name that was to resonate till the present day. The original trajectory of de Salaberry was east-west from Cartierville-Ahuntsic to Kirkland. It looked good on a map, but two large urban forests stood in its path – Saraguay and Bois-Franc Forests. The stage was set for events to trigger Montreal's first significant conservation efforts in a century.

*Conservation efforts
begin in the Village of
Saraguay*

The inspiration and impetus for the green space movement and its evolution into the Green Coalition began, quite by chance, in an obscure and little known community on the “Back River” (Rivière des Prairies) located about mid-way between the eastern and western tips of Montreal Island. The tiny Village of Saraguay, just a few streets wide, is nestled today between two large Nature-Parks, the Bois-de-Liesse and Bois-de-Saraguay. How that came to be and how Saraguay and its Forest became famous for a brief moment in Montreal's history in the late 1970s attests to the mindset and sheer doggedness of Saraguay Villagers.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the industrial barons of Montreal's Golden Square Mile had established large country estates and farms in Saraguay and environs for use during the summer. In Saraguay, these vast estates were managed as feudal fiefdoms with tied cottages to house their retainers – farmers, grooms, chauffeurs, butlers, maids and cooks. The wealthy land owners clubbed together to incorporate the Village of Saraguay as “a separate village municipality” in 1914, to maintain its unique rural aspect and, if truth be known, to keep out the ‘riff-raff’. Commercial development was outlawed. The only enterprise in Saraguay even today is the corner-store; formerly the Mic-Mac Restaurant; it acquired its rights before the incorporation.

In the early years, the Village of Saraguay was run like a private country club. But by the late 1940s, the old feudal order was crumbling. Service-men returning from World War II were not returning to their posts as faithful retainers on Saraguay estates; they were opting for taking up jobs in the city and for building modest homes on a tract of Saraguay farmland previously owned by Marcel Martin. Newcomers, like my parents, Tom and Mary Jackson, both school teachers, were also settling in the village center – called Shack Town by the wealthy land owners. Villagers were demanding a say in how Saraguay was run. In 1951, “commoners” were invited to join slates running for Council posts in the first election that followed due process. The Tom Jackson, Adrien Lecavalier, Hartland Campbell (Tommy) MacDougall slate, running on the platform “Keep Saraguay Beautiful”, carried the day.

*Saraguay joins
Montreal*

Whether they were conscious of the fact or not, old stock families, now independent of their wealthy overseers and the newcomers in the

Village had developed a special pride-of-place, a distillation of the best intents of the 1914 incorporation and a determination to build an attractive, quiet, riverside community. In 1964, however, the Village of Saraguay, population 427, succumbed to the blandishments of Mayor Jean Drapeau who promised that Saraguay would maintain its "*caractère champêtre et villageois*" and the villagers voted in favour of a merger with the City of Montreal. In return, the village received water, sewage services; fire and police protection; before this time villagers had fought chimney fires by bucket brigade, losing several homes in the process! In 1967, with By-law 3470, Saraguay was zoned *unifamilial résidentiel*, entrenching the merger promise, and the charter of the Village of Saraguay was revoked. Saraguay's wealthy estate owners had quietly begun to sell off their land holdings to developers. The old feudal era was at an end.

Major developments threaten Saraguay

Local humourist Tom Jackson used to say, "Saraguay didn't join Montreal, Montreal joined us". He was more prophetic than he could have known. Just ten years later, to the consternation of Saraguay residents, the City of Montreal proposed a zoning change, that was already in second reading in July 1977 when the villagers heard of it. The entire Saraguay Forest was to be razed for the construction of housing, fourteen apartment blocks, two shopping centres, Twin Towers on Gouin Boulevard and the Port-Plaisance Marina Complex on the waterfront. Eighty-five hectares, at least half of Saraguay Ward was to be developed and a major road, the de Salaberry Boulevard, was to cut through both the village and the forest. So incensed were some residents that they wanted to 'divorce' Montreal and join Ville Saint Laurent. But, Mary Jackson mounted a hard-hitting media and citizens' letter-writing campaign. The Mayor was presented with a petition signed by more than 95% of proprietors that I had circulated on my bicycle. On the eve of the third and final reading, Mayor Drapeau telephoned Mary Jackson with the news that the zoning change was to be withdrawn and that the Saraguay Forest was safe. He called again two weeks later with reassurances that the waterfront projects had been cancelled and de Salaberry shelved.

The 'bijou' of Montreal's green spaces - Bois-de-Saraguay

It was to take several more years of intense work on the part of many groups and individuals before Saraguay Forest was truly safe. For example, the Société d'Horticulture et d'Ecologie du Nord de Montréal worked tirelessly for the conservation of Saraguay Forest as a "Parc Naturel Urbain". The plight of the forest attracted the attention of the scientific community and numerous treatises were published on its exceptional ecological value. "La végétation et la flore du boisé de Saraguay" (Bouchard et Lacombe 1978) provides the definitive list of types of vegetation – 35 species of trees, 45 types of shrubs and 275 species of herbaceous plants; in addition, a dozen other vegetal species considered to be rare. Three amateur ornithological societies (Ducharme 1979) listed the birds of Saraguay – 129 species. For a

time, because of these attentions, l'érablière à Caryer du Bois-de-Saraguay became Montreal buzz-words! The Bois-de-Saraguay came to be regarded as the bijou of Montreal's green spaces - a pristine forest on the northern shoreline.

*Bois-de-Saraguay
piques interest of
Québec government*

The Bois-de-Saraguay case is known in green space and bureaucratic circles as the “*déclencheur*” or trigger that set Montreal conservation in motion. According to André Bouchard at the Jardin botanique de Montréal, “The campaign to conserve Bois-de-Saraguay was the catalyst for the creation of the MUC regional parks network”. The furor over Bois-de-Saraguay piqued the interest of Quebec and in 1979, the Provincial Government granted MUC the mandate to acquire, manage regional parks, along with the legal mechanisms to do so. Quebec injected \$10.5 million to start the acquisition program and an additional \$2 million towards the Saraguay Forest purchase in 1981.

*Early Green Space
Acquisition 1979-82*

During the first phase, between 1979 and 1982, Pointe-aux-Prairies, Ile-de-la-Visitation, Bois-de-Saraguay, Cap-Saint-Jacques, Bois-de-Liesse and L'Anse-à-l'Orme were acquired as Nature-parks. Subsequently the rhythm of acquisition slowed, although the establishment of park facilities continued. One of the powers conferred by Quebec in 1979 was the capacity to impose Interim Control Bylaws to freeze commercial development on desirable parklands until funds could be found for their acquisition. The MUC placed controls on fifteen forested sites in 1982. However, within a few years the protection was lifted from three sites and they were lost to development.

*Bois-de-Saraguay
decreed an
“Arrondissement
naturel”*

In Saraguay Village, folks were delighted that the natural sites that surrounded them were now protected in the Saraguay and Bois-de-Liesse Nature-Parks. They were cheered that the Quebec Government decreed the forested areas of Bois-de-Saraguay to be an *Arrondissement naturel* under the aegis of the Cultural Affairs Ministry in 1981, stipulating that no trees may felled. No other Nature-Park has this special layer of protection.

Local Creeks Polluted

But, by 1987, the Villagers were alarmed that Bertrand Creek was no longer freezing in the winter and in summer, the creek was a nasty poison green, with intermittent slicks of iridescent orange and yellow. Tracing the stream back through the Bois-de-Liesse parkland and the Bois-Franc Forest to its source in the centre of the island on Dorval Airport territory, a few citizens found numerous pipes oozing strange effluents into the Bertrand. When they poked at the streambed mini gushers spurted oily gouts into the water. Upon examination, Bouchard and Denis Creeks, the two other streams that have their

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source on airport land and that bracket the eastern and western borders of Dorval to empty into Lake Saint-Louis, appeared equally grim.

*Petition to clean up
local creeks signed by
20 000 people*

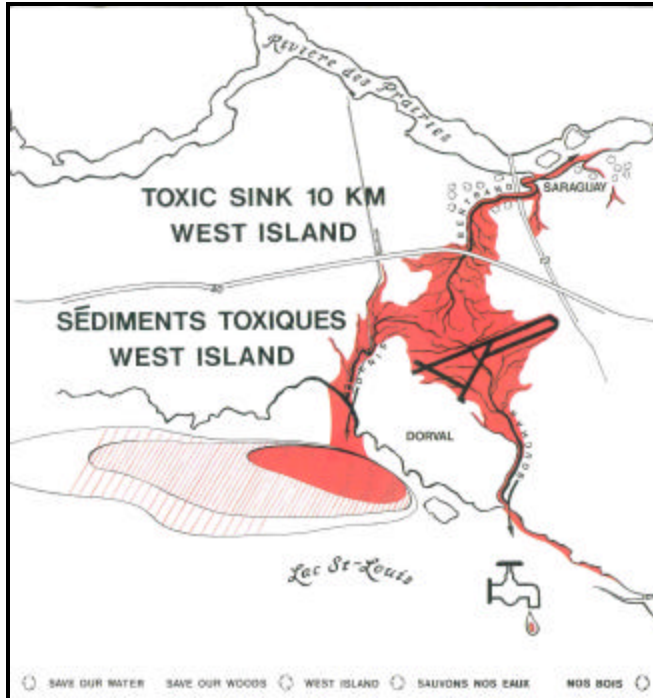


**Sylvia Oljemark and
Mary Jackson at the
toxic alert booth⁴**

In July 1987, Saraguay Citizens Group launched a campaign for a clean-up of West Island creeks. “Toxic Alert” fliers were distributed throughout the West Island; two hundred people replied to the call for help to circulate a petition. Saraguay Citizens Group Inc. was hastily incorporated as a prerequisite for occupying space at Fairview Shopping Centre. The group, with petitions, posters and \$1 million insurance (also required) in hand, arrived on the appointed date in August only to be ousted by Fairview management. Local Mayor Malcolm Knox had objected to the presence of the group at the mall. A mini media flap ensued and 6,000 people signed the petition when the group was reinstated the next day at Fairview. The petition, with a final tally of 20,000 signatures, was presented to MUC Chairman Michel Hamelin and then to Quebec Environment Minister, Clifford Lincoln.

A preliminary report by MUC and Quebec Environment departments on Bertrand Creek was made public in August. The study discerned that the sediments in Bertrand Creek were badly contaminated with heavy metals, oils and greases. Levels of some chemicals such as cyanide were “up to 17 times the most polluted level”. A special task force, involving Federal as well as the MUC and Quebec authorities, was established to study all the Island’s creeks and to determine a course of action. MUC Environment Commission Chairman, Sam Elkas said he was haunted by a TV clip that was continually broadcast that summer. The clip showed a shovel digging into the sediments at the bottom of Bertrand Creek, coming up laden with black, oily gloop contrasted against the brilliant green background of water plants. (That was Tom Jackson’s old long-handled shovel.)

⁴ Photo courtesy of collection of Sylvia Oljemark



Fliers calling attention to the polluted creeks were distributed throughout the West Island

De-Salaberry to cut Bois-Franc in half

During creek discussions with local officials, Mayor Ed Janisjewski mentioned, en passant, that the southern part of Bois-Franc Forest was slated for high-density housing and was not included within the limits of Bois-de-Liesse Nature-park and that six-lane de Salaberry was soon to cut the forest in half. Early park plans had included the entire forest so this was shocking news. Citizens thought that they had successfully shelved the construction of de Salaberry through Saraguay Forest in 1977, but here was de Salaberry - a threat to a second urban forest – the Bois Franc.

MUC Hearings:

While awaiting the news of the creek task force, Saraguay Citizens turned their attentions to the menace facing Bois-Franc Forest. In November, the MUC held public hearings for input on how to spend \$30 million for nature-park amenities and management. Most of the forty-odd briefs presented passionately called upon the MUC to defer all *aménagement* spending in favour of green space acquisition, including my own brief – “Save the Bois-Franc”.

Surely if enough people saw the magnificent Bois-Franc, it would be saved! During the winter 1987-88, the group offered free ski tours to promote the use and enjoyment of Bois-de-Liesse Park. Many joined the ski tours including mayors, councillors and journalists. When Dorval Mayor Peter Yeomans and Dollard-des-Ormeaux Mayor Ed Janisjewski skied the Bois-Franc one sunny winter day, Ed took a tumble on the downhill to the flimsy old bridge over the creek. It's a



Ski trips through the forest⁵

standing joke that we should have lost Ed Janisjewski in the Bertrand; he is the most vociferous advocate of the de Salaberry extension even today!



Oljemark, Craig McKee
Oljemark often leads groups of cross-country skiers, such as this one, along trails in Bois de Liesse Regional Park in winter.

Widening the scope of the green space protection efforts became a priority for Saraguay Citizens through that winter ski season. Feisty leaders like Diane Fauteux, defender of Pierrefonds' green space and agricultural land and Nicole David Strauss, formidable advocate for saving Bois-de-l'Île-Bizard, had come to the fore during the November MUC hearings. They were ready, as were others, to bring their forces together to make common cause to protect the environment and, in April 1988, twelve groups formed an alliance called Green Environment West Island (L'Ouest de L'Ile en Vert).

*Bouchard and Bertrand
Creeks designated
“dangerous waste sites”*

The long-awaited creek report was made public in April. Sections of the beds of Bouchard and Bertrand Creeks were designated dangerous waste sites, earning the disgusting distinction of being the first watercourses ever to acquire such labels. Some two hundred companies were deemed responsible. Fifty companies – Dorval Airport, Air Canada, trucking firms, chemical producers and others were actually identified as causing the very high concentrations of oil, grease, arsenic, cyanide, mercury, lead, copper and nickel in the sediments. This was the first time that the Quebec government named

⁵ Photo Credit: Craig McKee; “Green space Groups Gain Momentum”; The Chronicle; November 22, 1989

specific companies in this type of situation. Bertrand sediments had the highest levels of oil and grease – 21,000 parts per million – 2,000 ppm is considered polluted.

Toxic creeks gained considerable media coverage⁶



The West Island has two sewer systems; the storm sewers for rain water runoff and the sanitary system for human and industrial wastes. Cross-connections were largely blamed for the creek pollution; evidently contractors building new plants routinely flip a coin to choose which pipes to hook up! Industrial wastes entered the storm sewers leading to the creeks. Leaking and overflowing septic tanks in Saint Laurent industrial sectors that had no sewers at all aggravated the problem, as did midnight dumping by waste haulers.

Sediments were to be left untouched, lest more damage be done in trying to remove them, cross-connections were corrected, and increased surveillance and regular water testing were required. Dorval Airport spent \$10 million for catchment basins to retrieve glycol de-icing run-off that had been largely responsible for the creeks not freezing. To the naked eye, the creeks appear in better shape but are still subject to occasional spills and official vigilance has slackened.

1988 Green Day boosts conservation efforts



The media buzz over the creek report greatly enhanced the profile of the volunteer activists and their efforts. On May 14, 1988, Green Environment West Island and east-end group Loisir-ville hosted a special event, Green Day, in Bois-de-Liesse Regional Park. The public was invited to celebrate Montreal's green spaces and by their presence support the call for an MUC Green Space Program. Three thousand people joined the festivities! The Guest of Honour was Frédérik Back, Oscar Winner for "L'homme qui plantait des arbres". Boy Scouts led tours in Bois-Franc, local politicians participated and Dorval Mayor Peter Yeomans brought his fire pits and cooked the hotdogs. The umbrella group received hundreds of letters of support from businesses, school boards, institutions and environmental groups across Quebec.

⁶ Photo Credit George Bird; Author Rick Boychuk; "Two Creeks Labeled Dangerous Waste Sites"; Montreal Gazette; April 14, 1989

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The Green Day had many positive spinoffs. The general population had been alerted to the crisis and many individuals and groups were rallied to the cause. Following the Green Day successes, naturalist and educator, David Fletcher formed the Dollard des Ormeaux group, Citizens for Bois Franc and his Sunday Nature Tours through the forest lured adults and children alike, boosting the group's membership. The group was to make a pivotal contribution as the endangered half of the forest was in Dollard, where Mayor Ed Janisjewski was intransigently opposed to the forest's conservation and adamant that de Salaberry must crunch through Bois-Franc to Highway 13. By the end of 1988, with seemingly boundless energy, the activists were mobilizing crowds of green space enthusiasts to attend the monthly MUC council meetings for question period. Environmentalist Patrick Donovan, of Conservation Pledge Canada, joined in and applied his business acumen to call for setting up funding vehicles based on U.S. models – Land Trusts, Conservation Bonds and a Loto Vert. These three groups, Citizens for Bois-Franc, Saraguay Citizens and Conservation Pledge were to be the engine of the conservation thrust.



**The Chronicle,
October 18, 1989**

*Protections for 12
forests to terminate,
December 31, 1989*

In February 1989, the Citizens for Bois-Franc made a \$12 million offer to purchase the forest. The group intended to funnel a combination of private funds, provincial and federal and MUC grants through the new *Fondation Espaces Verts*, being set up by Loisir-Ville's Pierre Béléc to finance the endeavour. Lobbying excursions to Ottawa and Quebec to meet federal environment minister Lucien Bouchard and his counterpart Pierre Paradis had elicited seemingly favourable responses. The Grilli Corporation flatly spurned the offer in the same week that Dollard Council passed a resolution calling for the immediate construction of de Salaberry Boulevard through the Bois-Franc.

Panic was setting in at the grass-roots level across Montreal's territory as the gravity of the green space crisis came to be understood. The Interim Control Bylaws that protected twelve forests, eleven of them in West Island, from all development were to terminate December 31, 1989. Simultaneously, all 28 MUC municipalities were required to complete urban plans for their future development by the same December 31 deadline. The urban plans had to conform to the MUC *Schéma d'aménagement* (Master Plan) adopted in 1987. Here was a classic Catch-22 situation. No municipality, if it had a sizable chunk of ecologically valuable real estate within its borders, could afford on its own, the multi-millions to purchase it. Nor could a municipality simply green-zone a site in its urban plan: it had to purchase the land first.

⁷ Les Nouvelles Saint Laurent; May 31, 1988

⁸ Photo Credit Michael Dugass; Melanie Clulow "Groups fighting to save forest from Bulldozer" Montreal Gazette; October 6, 1988

Collectively the municipalities, through the regional MUC administration, had the capacity to share the investment in important green spaces, but the MUC had produced a Master Plan with no provisions to protect the territory's natural heritage! Sadly, this master plan entrenched plans for de Salaberry to be built through Bois-Franc.

*Conservation efforts
abound across Montreal*



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The resulting clamour to save Montreal's last green spaces escalated through the balance of the year. Virtually every West Island community had a group joining the fray. Unfortunately space permits the naming of just a few of the dedicated groups. Interaction Pointe-Claire's Diane Noel, who had struggled and lost a bid to save the Glenaladale waterfront, warned that Grilli wanted to buy the Beaconsfield Golf Course (located in Pointe Claire) for development. In neighbouring Beaconsfield, Cheryl Yank and Doug Hamilton, Doug Smith, Anne-Marie Parent and Dena Gill had revived the decades-old controversy over Angell Woods, insisting that it be saved for posterity. The Citizens to Save Sainte-Anne's Forests also had powerful and determined leaders, such as Linda Trickey speaking out, especially for the inelegantly named Woods #3, adjoining L'Anse-à-l'Orme. Mike Van der Linden and Diane Fauteaux were continuing their defense of the agricultural heritage of Senneville and Pierrefonds, respectively. In addition, agricultural dezoning in Île-Bizard threatened to punch up the acquisition price of the forest being defended by Nicole David-Strauss and Bernard Strauss and bitter disputes arose over the dreaded 440 autoroute.

Mid-town, efforts were underway to wrest Meadowbrook Golf Course, that straddles parts of Ville Saint Pierre, Montreal West and Côte Saint-Luc, from the clutches of Marathon, the real estate arm of Canadian Pacific. The developers were pressing for new zoning to permit residential construction. Kay Wolofsky and Dida Berku were leading the truly David versus Goliath struggle to save Meadowbrook as a green space. Folks were becoming vocal, too, for the ecologically disadvantaged east-end of Montreal, asking that the water courses, Ruisseau-de-Montigny and Ruisseau-Pinel with their verdant drainage basins be protected and that Bois-d'Anjou be preserved. Loisir-Ville's new president, Claire Le Roux and Nicole Gagnon of Sajib (Société d'animation du jardin botanique), envisaged re-greening projects for contaminated and abandoned industrial sites. These included the conversion of the old railways that criss-cross the east to green corridors for hiking and cycling and the transformation of dingy alleys into inner-city playground oases.

⁹ Photo Credit Brian Sherratt; Craig McKee; "Green Groups Gain Momentum; The Chronicle; November 22, 1989



10

Birth of the Green Coalition

Through the spring and summer of 1989, phalanxes of green space supporters attended each and every meeting of MUC Council and of the Planning Commission, tying up question periods and pressing vigorously for green space action. The media was agog and constant coverage of the Coalition's exploits helped to fuel the debate.

By September 1989, Green Environment West Island badly needed a new, more appropriate name to define its character: forty groups from all parts of the MUC and from Kanesastake to St. Bruno had joined the alliance. The chosen name was the Green Coalition (Coalition Verte). Soon green buttons with the Coalition's tree logo were sprouting everywhere! Concurrently with the fierce lobbying, the Coalition was pulling together its policy document, The Green Paper, outlining its tenets and objectives, and also drafting the articles for its Charter. Though best known for its green space efforts, the Coalition's member-groups were working on a broad range of environmental issues - such as recycling and waste management, alternatives to pesticides, improved public transit, water pollution and the need for strong application of the polluter-pay principle - all addressed in the policy paper. The Green Paper also called for the MUC to invest \$500 million in the acquisition and management of the territory's green spaces. That figure, based on old MUC studies and real estate analysis, defined the needs to boost per-capita green space to levels comparable to other Canadian cities.

\$500 million MUC Green Space Policy pulled from agenda by suburban mayors



On September 19, with great anticipation, the grass-roots were out in force for the MUC Planning Commission meeting. The citizens were ready to cheer and applaud the preliminary presentation of the MUC's new \$500 million Green Space Policy! Working from the same data sets as the Green Coalition, MUC planners and the Planning Commission had come to the same dollar figure needed to balance the territory's green space deficit. The new policy called for 1,200 hectares of West Island land to be conserved as regional parks, the acquisition of east-end industrial land for rehabilitation through greening, the establishment of an island-wide network of cycling and pedestrian paths and a long-term plan for shoreline protection. But, as the citizens lined up to sign in for question period, it became known that the Green Space Policy had been pulled from the agenda by the Suburban Mayors, in part due to the failure of the Quebec government to offer any financial support. "Foul", cried the environmentalists, as they dominated the question period for over two hours. Developers' bulldozers were waiting in the wings to chew up the green spaces with the protection of the Interim Control Bylaw running out December

¹⁰ Craig McKee; "Green Groups Gain Momentum; The Chronicle; November 22, 1989

31. Throngs of Green Coalition supporters redoubled their attendance at local council meetings, calling for municipalities to delay their urban plans past the same fateful December 31 due date.

Slowly, during October and November of 1989, under the spotlight of ever increasing media attention, Mayors and councils were turning green. At a crowded Sainte Anne de Bellevue council meeting, Mayor René Martin that he “fully supported saving L’Anse-à-l’Orme forest” (also called Woods #3 or Sainte Anne’s Forest), a reversal of his previous stance. Bowing to the pressure, Beaconsfield Council passed two resolutions calling for Angell Woods to be preserved, but only if Beaconsfield did not have to pay for the purchase. Constant Coalition critic, Mayor Pat Rustad, wrote the second resolution that focused on private funding methods to protect the Woods, taking a page from the Coalition’s book. On October 10, when 250 people crammed Dollard Council chamber, Mayor Ed Janisjewski relaxed his iron rule of hearing Dollard residents only, permitting to all who approached the microphone to speak. Speak they did, insisting that Bois-Franc must be saved, - ordinary citizens, Girl Guides, Citizens for Bois-Franc and Green Coalition reps - and finally after 11p.m., council passed a resolution that called for Dollard to take whatever action might be needed to save the Bois-Franc Forest. Then, in a ‘surprise’ move in November, Dollard convened a 5:30 p.m. council meeting to adopt its urban plan, still showing high density housing slated for the Bois-Franc. Hastily, more than 100 people were called out to the meeting. Council was convinced to delay adopting the plan until December.

*Revised MUC Green
Space Policy promises
\$200 million*

Activists hoped the month of December would bring an end to such machinations and the seemingly endless round of running from one public meeting to the next. On December 11, the MUC Planning Commission unveiled its revised Green Space Policy, a plan to spend \$200 million for the acquisition and management of the territory’s green spaces to replace the \$500 million plan rejected by suburban mayors. Unlike the September plan that stipulated that most of the money for parkland acquisition would have to come from the federal and provincial governments, the new version stated that the MUC would contribute all of the money. “We have to go it alone,” lamented Mayor Peter Yeomans, referring to unfruitful lobbying by the Green Coalition and local politicians to squeeze funding from the superior governments.

*Concrete plant proposed
for Bois-de-Liesse*

But, the cheering on December 11 was put on hold as the environmentalists dashed from the planning meeting to a public consultation that was already underway at Saint Laurent City Hall. Under discussion was a rezoning bylaw to permit the construction of a concrete plant at the entry to Bois-de-Liesse Regional Park. Despite the Coalition’s protests, the bylaw was passed. The only recourse was for the activists to work through the holidays to mobilize enough

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citizens to sign a register on January 9 to send the matter to a referendum.

Finally, on December 20, 1989, Green Coalition leaders, member groups and supporters (setting aside the cement plant work) gathered for question period to cheer on the full MUC Council as it proceeded to vote unanimously to adopt its "*Stratégie d'action pour les espaces naturels*"- its \$200 million Green Space Acquisition and Aménagement Program. The plan was short on specifics, but it was announced that the Bois-Franc would be the first purchase, just as soon as a decision was made either to expropriate or to purchase the forest outright. Through the next year, the municipalities duly filed their urban plans, many opting to maintain interim controls on their prized green spaces to allow time for the Green space program to kick in. Sadly, however, Beaconsfield's urban plan provided protection to just a 10 hectare corridor of the 80 hectare Angell Woods.

Green Coalition stops construction of cement plant

On January 9, 1990, the Green Coalition and its member group Environment Saint Laurent scored a minor, but satisfying victory in preventing the construction of the Canada Cement LaFarge plant at Bois-de-Liesse. A command post was set up outside City Hall in a van rigged with a prototype cell phone borrowed from the Earth Day Committee's John Kohos. The tally on the register was relayed to local radio stations throughout the day, enticing residents to add their signatures and inviting them for free coffee and donuts served on the van's tailgate! In total 939 signatures were needed. More than 1,500 citizens signed to protect their park from noise, pollution, the lumbering traffic of cement trucks and the visual blight of the plant's 10 storey tower. Saint Laurent Council abandoned the plan.





Bois-Franc and Bois-de-l'Île-Bizard saved!



The first Annual General Meeting of the Green Coalition, in April, 1990, was a celebration of achievements to date and the Coalition's incorporation. With nine-month old Martin perched on his shoulder, the new Treasurer, Alan DeSousa presented copies of the federal Charter to the crowd. The broad-based Charter – groups can join world-wide – outlines the structure and objectives of the non-profit association to “conserve, protect and restore the environment”. I was honoured to become the Green Coalition's first president.

In April 1990, the deal to purchase Bois-Franc for \$14.9 million and Bois-de-l'Île-Bizard for \$13.5 million was finally struck and approved by MUC Council. In Île-Bizard, a new nature-park was to be created covering 209 hectares, including the servitude for Autoroute 440. The addition of Bois-Franc to the Bois-de-Liesse Nature-Park increased the size of that park to 165 hectares. Each of the two new giant parks represents a parkland bio-mass roughly the size of Mount Royal Park!

But, there was a fly in the ointment, perhaps two flies! The deed of sale for the Bois-Franc land included a servitude, (33.5 meters wide) through the middle of the forest for the construction of six-lane de Salaberry. And, that 440 Autoroute servitude – was it just on loan to the Île-Bizard park? Surely the two highways would never be built through the two nature-parks, squandering the \$28.4 million of taxpayers money invested in green space, not asphalt!

In June 1990, Environment Saint Laurent again rallied residents to city hall. This time, at the urban plan consultation in June, citizens requested council to pass a resolution opposing the construction of de Salaberry through Bois-Franc into Saint Laurent. Council passed the resolution. Eleven years later, again at the request of the Green Coalition, in December 2001, Saint Laurent City Council City was to unanimously pass a second resolution opposing the de Salaberry construction. This, at their last meeting before the mega-city merger!

Agitation to save green space continued through the next year but by the spring of 1991, the MUC Green Space Program itself appeared to be in trouble. No new sites had been acquired for a year; expropriation of some had begun, but details were unavailable, officials citing delicacy in negotiations as the reason for their reticence. The east-end Ruisseau-Pinel conservation project had been abandoned. By October 1991, MUC Chairman Vera Danyluk had begun using the dreaded word, “Moratorium”, in the public media.

In the autumn of 1991, the Moratorium to halt all green space purchases was looming, as was more biomass destruction in the West Island. The MUC wanted the *Commission de protection du territoire agricole du Québec* (CPTAQ) to de-zone 500 farmland hectares: the CPTAQ suggested 200 more be de-zoned. In September 1991, these two bodies convened the public hearings, judged the proceedings and decided the outcome, which resulted in the de-zoning of 700 hectares of Quebec's prime agricultural land, carving the heart from the farm zone located in Pierrefonds, Senneville, Sainte Anne de Bellevue and Île Bizard. Despite the Green Coalition's defence of the farmland and the opposition of almost all 300 people present at the hearings the die had already been cast. Ironically, a 1989 MUC report had called for the preservation of 1,000 hectares of arable land in the agricultural as a minimum critical mass for agriculture to be viable in the MUC. The MUC's "Biomass-Map" report, also in 1989, urgently called for the vegetation cover of the Island to be augmented by 25% - illogical, then, to diminish the farm zone.

The Green Coalition continued to press the MUC to strengthen its resolve to protect the green spaces, to step-up the pace of acquisition while land prices and interest rates were low. A flurry of laudable land purchases followed; Bois-d'Anjou and Bois-de-la-Roche Nature-Parks were created; 28 hectares of Sainte-Anne's forest was added to L'Anse-à-l'Orme Nature-Park, Hawthorndale linear park and a few islands were acquired. But then, the environmentalists were angered by the news that green space purchases could soon be stopped. In a closed door meeting held May 13, 1992, the Suburban Mayors voted unanimously to gut the green space program, calling for the MUC to halt all expropriations and acquisition negotiations and to abolish reserves that protected a number of sites from development.

MUC Green Space Program scrapped

At public forums and at press conferences, citizens decried the mayors' cloaked intent to dismantle the program (they were calling their proposals "a 3 year moratorium"). The MUC even rejected an appeal from Planning Commission Chairman, Hubert Simard for the MUC to intervene to salvage green spaces if, "in exceptional cases", they came under threat of immediate development. Said Green Coalition president, Sylvia Oljemark, in a news release, "Why scrap this program to offset our Island's appalling green space deficit now, when economic conditions favour the acquisition of these heritage sites as never before? It shows a criminal lack of vision to leave the last green spaces prey to developers, when these investments cost a fraction of 1% of the MUC annual budget - less than one dollar (\$1.00) per person per year". It was not to be. Fearing a backlash in adopting the MUC annual budget, the City of Montreal caved in and joined the Mayors in voting to impose the Moratorium on October 21, 1992.

The MUC's last green spaces were up for grabs: development could

begin immediately. Left in the lurch and unprotected were the planned acquisitions including; 18 hectares of L'Anse-à-l'Orme forest, 10 hectares of Beaconsfield's Angell Woods, the southern last bits of Bois-Franc, lands adjacent Bois-de-l'Île-Bizard and Bois-de-Saraguay, 10 hectares on the northern slopes of Mount Royal, shorelines along the Rapides-du-Cheval-Blanc and, in the eco-crippled east end – 22 hectares east of the Quarry, Ruisseau-de-Montigny and Ruisseau-Pinel, as well as lands on a number of islands where expropriation was incomplete and halted.

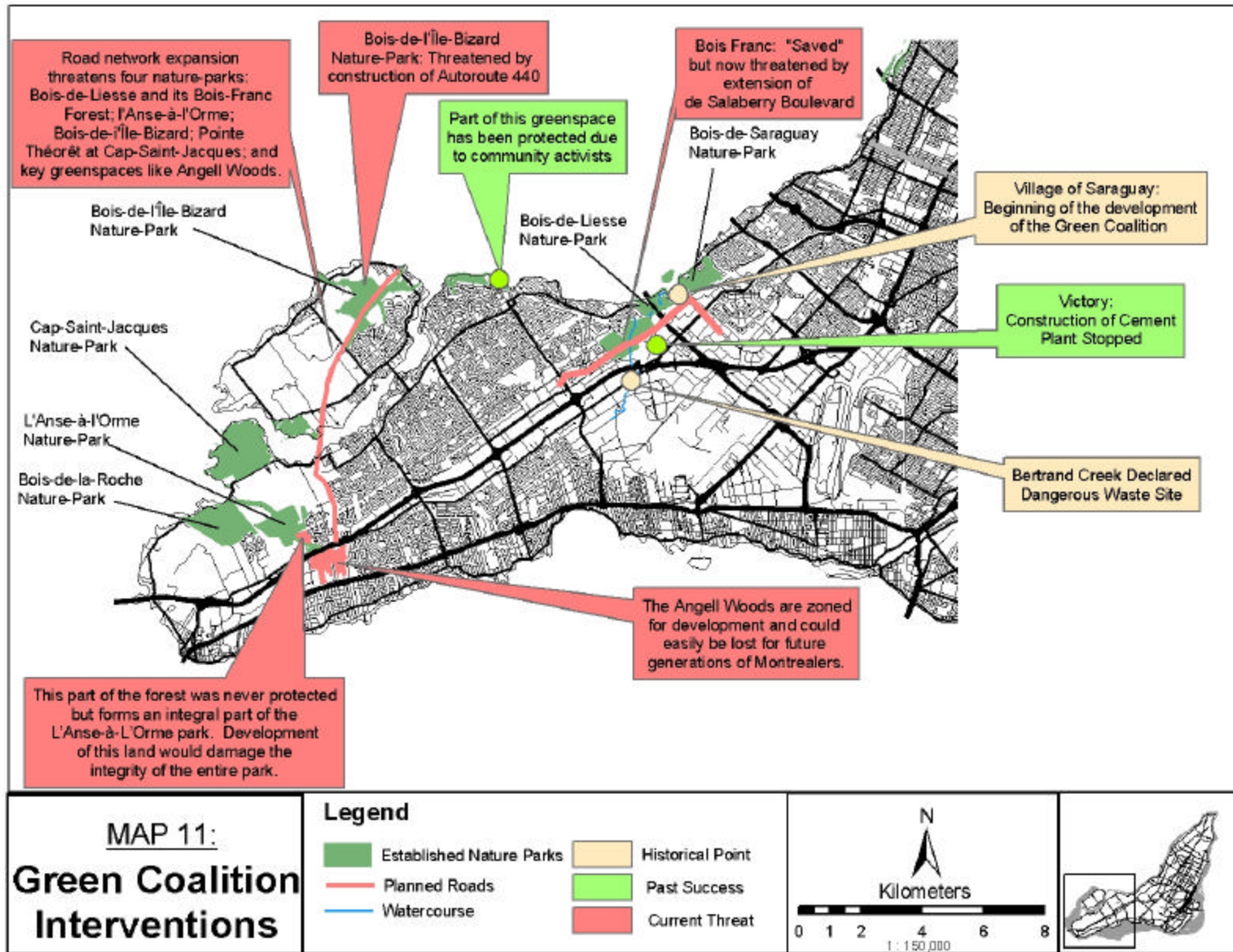
The Moratorium was a devastating blow to the Green Coalition. Al Hayek, who was ably contributing to the successful push to scuttle the \$300 million Foster Wheeler incinerator planned for the east-end, took up the reins as the Coalition's next president. He, along with a board of directors, composed mainly of indefatigable Meadowbrook supporters, was to maintain a mostly care-taker status for the Coalition through the Moratorium hiatus. It was to be a long hiatus! It was to be 10 long years before Mayor Gérald Tremblay lifted the spending Moratorium in May 2002.

*Bois de Liesse in the
springtime¹¹*



¹¹ Green Coalition archives, 2003

Montreal's Green Space Story



Coming Full Circle

*Repeated threats to
Bois-de-Saraguay
Nature-park*

Montreal's green space story was to come full circle back to Saraguay Village and its Nature-Park. Not once, but twice in the late 1990s, the villagers took up cudgels to fend off the amputation of a waterfront portion of the Bois-de-Saraguay Nature-Park. Due to an ill-conceived "Parks for Profit" policy adopted by the MUC in 1996, Manoir MacDougall in Bois-de-Saraguay was placed on a 'bâtiments rentables' list and became a target for mega development projects. The Manoir site was vulnerable, being the only part of the park not included in the 'arrondissement naturel' because it is not forested.

In 1998, the MUC planned to lease the Manoir for up 30 years, for a Hotel/Restaurant project. Saraguay Citizens Group rallied 150 residents to the public hearing at the Manoir. The powers that be had forgotten the grit of Saraguay residents. They had set out only 40 chairs! The plan was soundly trounced. Then in 2001, the old City of Montreal planned to take over and develop the Manoir for multi-purpose use unrelated to the Nature-Park. The formation of the new city has halted this process for now. Saraguay Citizens Group presented a brief at the Montreal Summit, calling for this "forgotten nature-park" to be opened to the public and for park facilities be set up at the Manoir, before it falls prey to developers. Bois-de-Saraguay Nature-Park was acquired more than twenty years ago! There are no services to welcome the public; majestic riverfront sections of the park remain fenced off and inaccessible. Vandals have fired two heritage buildings on the abandoned site; one was then torn down by the MUC.



Montreal Gazette, May 10, 2002¹²

*Proposed road network
threatens established
nature-parks*

Saraguay's woes served as a wake-up call for the Green Coalition. By July 2001, the campaign to elect political leaders for the new megacity was in full swing, stirring hopes for reviving the long-dormant green space issue. Coalition leaders began vigorously lobbying the candidates to lift the moratorium on green space acquisition, to stop the extension of de Salaberry and to bolster statutes to protect the nature-parks from being eroded by development pressures. Unbelievably, current statutes are so weak that portions of nature-parks (if not whole parks) can be leased, sold or rezoned! Such amputations of the parks have already happened or have been fought off by citizen action.

The exciting advent of the New City on January 1, 2002, revitalized the

¹² Henry Aubin; "Paving a West Island Vision" The Montreal Gazette; May 10, 2002

rank and file of the Green Coalition. But, it was the front-page Gazette news on May 10, that political forces had been at work for some time behind closed doors for a “spaghetti network” of new roads, that spurred the Coalition to full alert. Bois-de-Liesse had long been threatened by de Salaberry but now many other natural sites acquired through the environmentalists’ efforts could be cut into useless pieces by road building. To destroy these hard-won Nature-Parks now would squander the taxpayers’ millions invested in these parklands through the MUC Green Space Acquisition Program, make a mockery of the citizens’ past successes, and increase the city’s green space deficit.

Alternative transportation plans are needed

New roads spawn more cars and pollution – build them and they will come! Green Coalition transit surveys show 87% of rush-hour vehicles on Trans-Canada carry one person – the driver. There is no need for new roads to encourage such practices, but attractive public transit alternatives must be put in place, such as the conversion of the Doney Spur Line¹³ to light rail transit. The *Agence métropolitaine de transport* is conducting a feasibility study of the Doney Spur’s potential to become an important new axis for integrated mass transit.

Mayor Tremblay lifts the Green Space Moratorium

On May 27, 2002, the Green Coalition and *Conseil régional de l’environnement de Montréal* joined forces to rally citizens for Council question period to call upon Mayor Gérald Tremblay to save the green spaces and to scrap the road network. The Mayor replied, ‘I like green spaces, too!’ and announced that he was lifting the 10-year-old Moratorium on spending for green space acquisition and that he, along with Councillor Alan DeSousa, Executive Committee Member for Environment, would create a new framework to protect Montreal’s green space. The response delighted the two coalitions. The Mayor and Alan DeSousa also accepted the Green Coalition’s invitation to visit the Bois-Franc Forest and the Doney Spur to see what the fuss was over building six-lane de Salaberry Boulevard through Bois-de-Liesse Nature-Park.

Lifting the moratorium was promising and in June 2002, Montreal Summit participants were permitted to shape the text of policies that will guide the New City. However, citizens were told there was to be no discussion on budgets. The pitiful sum of \$25 million, to be matched by Quebec (maybe) for green space acquisition over 10 years, was pre-determined by bureaucrats behind closed doors with no public input.

An estimated \$200 million is needed to save Montreal’s green spaces

Green Coalition’s David Fletcher was granted just 90 seconds before the assembled dignitaries at the Summit Plenary to make his impassioned plea that there is an urgent need to invest a minimum of

¹³ For a more complete discussion of public transit in the West Island, see David Fletcher’s contribution to the West Island Atlas.

Montreal's Green Space Story

\$200 million to acquire Montreal's last irreplaceable natural green spaces. When the Moratorium on green space spending was imposed in 1992, approximately one-half the budget, \$100 million, was left unspent. The green space dollar needs identified in the MUC program are still the same, even exacerbated. To complete the objectives established then will require a minimum \$200 million to account for the diminished buying power of today's dollar. The unspent \$100 million would have bought a lot of land in 1992 – land prices and interest rates were low!

At the city council meeting later in June, the Pierrefonds' Rapides-du-Cheval-Blanc waterfront controversy boiled over. The issue served to focus City Hall's attention on the green space crisis. Robert Libman and Cosmo Maciocia, Executive Committee members for Urban Planning and Parks, respectively, were mandated to join Alan DeSousa in fast-tracking the new program to protect green space and shorelines. The dispute over the massive residential development planned for Montreal's largest remaining undeveloped waterfront continued to rage through the summer. Close to one hundred citizens with placards, banners and buttons were at City Hall for the council meeting August 19, calling for the site to be saved. Le comité pour la préservation du secteur des Rapides du Cheval Blanc, a member group of the Green Coalition, pleaded their case during question period and the Coalition called for the entire site to be saved.

Cheval Blanc declared a qualified victory

During the question period at the council meeting on the same date, Mayor Tremblay responded to Cheval Blanc defenders. As the first step in the "Natural Spaces Policy", now promised by year's end, the City was entering a 120-day negotiation period with a view to purchasing Cheval Blanc shoreline property, eliminating the planned construction of two ten story towers on the riverbank. Housing construction on part of the site farther inland would proceed. The compromise, while not ideal, was hailed as a green space victory.



The Green Coalition organized the Bois-Franc Forest Visit on October 26, 2002 to gather support both from the public and key politicians to save Montreal's last green spaces and to protect established nature-parks from increased road building. The visit was a huge success and despite the drenching rain, 300 supporters gathered at the forest in the Bois-de-Liesse Nature-Park to offer a warm welcome to special guests, Mayor Gérald Tremblay, Councillor Alan DeSousa. The mayor's entourage included Executive Committee members, Robert Libman and Peter Yeomans, Majority Leader Dida Berku, Borough Chairman Monique Worth, Councillor Bert Ward and Dollard Chairman Ed Janisjewski. The Quebec contingent included Liguori Hinse, sous-ministre adjoint des Transports and Madame Junca-Adenot, president of the Agence métropolitaine de transport. Environment champion M.P. Clifford Lincoln was also present to lend his support. Together, the elected officials and citizens walked the forest path through the nature-park where six-lane de Salaberry Boulevard could be built.



After the walk through the magnificent Bois-Franc, with its rich and glowing fall colours enhanced by the rain, the dignitaries visited the Doney Spur to consider the merits of transforming the old railway spur into a splendid new axis for mass transit. Mayor Tremblay's sympathy for the forest's plight was palpable as he listened carefully to citizens' comments throughout the event. His words of encouragement and commendation of the public-spirited citizens for their determination to save Montreal's last natural spaces and to prevent nature-parks being destroyed by roads were cheered by the throng at the Accueil des Champs. However, the Mayor made no promises that de Salaberry would not be built!

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Even as the citizens were distributing fliers door-to-door, rallying individuals and their families for the Bois-Franc Visit, they were working on the petition opposing the spaghetti road network. Many petition sheets, signed on that very wet day, are water-stained mementos of the special event! In November 2002, the first instalment of the Green Coalition's Petition, complete with 3,602 signatures was presented to City Council. The petition reads as follows: "We, the undersigned, oppose six-lane de Salaberry (33.5 m wide) being built through Bois-Franc Forest in Bois-de-Liesse Nature-Park AND other roads that would impact Nature-Parks and/or green-spaces." To date there has been little official response on the status of the road network dossier, just that it is under study and that no road building would proceed without public consultation

*David Fletcher and
Sylvia Oljemark
working to protect
Montreal's green spaces
in 2003¹⁴*



*City budget allots only
\$1.5 million for green
spaces over 3 years*

Throughout the first year of the New City, Mayor Tremblay and his team have reiterated their election campaign mantra – "What's green will remain green." Signals from City Hall have been encouraging with the lifting of the green space spending moratorium and the promise of a new green space protection plan. Month after month, the Mayor has responded graciously and positively in council question periods as green space defenders gathered wearing their Green Coalition buttons. But, funding for Montreal's new green space plan is on the ropes. The city's budget adopted in December 2002 provides just \$1.5 million over the next 3 years – essentially **no money for green space purchases.**

Sadly, political will is measured in hard currency and action, not in pleasant promises. The budget's dismal bottom line speaks volumes

¹⁴ Nathalie Villeneuve; *Last Call pour les Espaces Verts*; Cités Nouvelles; January 26, 2003: Photo Credit; Jacques Pharand

about the city's lack of political will to convert talk into action on the green space front. When the budget was tabled, the mayor was queried at council about this lack of demonstrable political will and asked what message he would send to the many individuals and groups who had been stimulated to join the Coalition since his Forest Visit. Mayor Tremblay replied " Give them the same message" ... he'd offered then, that city hall was listening to their concerns and that his green space team was working hard on the new conservation plan. He also exhorted Green Coalition members to "keep on doing what you're doing!"

*Quebec-Montreal
"Contrat de ville"
contains no money for
green spaces*

At year's end, Green Coalition spokespersons were urgently demanding an immediate meeting with Quebec Environment Minister André Boisclair before the signing of the 'Contrat de ville' between Quebec and Montreal was signed. The new fiscal pact had been touted with great fanfare at the Montreal Summit in June. Reliable sources reveal there is **no money for green space purchases** provided in the *Contrat*. Even the \$50 million over 10 years to have been shared by Montreal and Quebec, earmarked at the Summit, is missing. Coalition spokespersons want to focus the Minister's attention on the desperate straits of Montreal green space. Substantial core funding from Quebec, to be matched by the City of Montreal and bolstered by private funds is being sought for the cause. An urgent request for a meeting was mailed in June. There has been no written reply to the June letter and other letters, only verbal promises. The spokespersons were also seeking the government's legislative assistance in setting up funding vehicles based on U.S. models, such as land trusts, green Conservation Bonds and a Loto vert to facilitate private fund-raising.

It is time that the Quebec government accepted its responsibility for Montreal's green space deficit. The Quebec Government belatedly granted legal powers to the MUC to acquire and manage Nature-Parks in 1979. Other North-American cities had begun conservation action long before. For example, Toronto and Ontario have shared equally in the acquisition and management of Toronto's green space network over the past 40 years. The MUC made heroic catch-up efforts, investing close to \$200 million between 1979 and 1992 in the creation 9 large Nature-Parks (1,386 hectares). However, in comparison the total contribution by the Quebec Government is \$12.5 million - a token and trifling sum invested in two installments in 1979 and 1981.

It's now or never: If Quebec and Montreal fail now to provide the needed green space dollars in the *Contrat de ville*, in 5 years, the earliest time when it could be renegotiated, time will be up for Montreal's green spaces. In 5 years most of the ecologically prized sites will be gone. The Quebec Government owes a significant debt to present and future generations of Montrealers to help purchase and conserve the

last portions of the New City's green heritage. Failure to provide the needed funds now will mean that these lands will be built over and our Island will soon become Asphaltville.



Members of the Tremblay administration tour the Bois Franc forest in last weekend's rain.

With the fate of Montreal's natural heritage hanging in the balance, and the final chapter of the green space story being written, the objectives of the Green Coalition remain the same. The grass-roots activists are adamant that Montreal's last remaining green spaces must be saved, nature-parks must be protected with stronger statutes and new road development cannot be allowed to destroy established nature-parks. The Green Coalition insists on the implementation of the city's new green space plan, the long-promised "*Politique de protection des milieux naturels de Montréal*".

The city's new policy must provide for the conservation of a T-shaped green-belt from Saint Anne de Bellevue in the west to eastern Île Bizard and from Cap-Saint-Jacques in the north to include Angell Woods in the south. This green-belt can be created by strategic acquisitions of linking lands between the large green spaces in this zone that that are already protected. Also, the sites that were left unprotected when the Moratorium was imposed in 1992 should be included in the new plan. These are Ruisseau-de-Montigny and Ruisseau-Pinel in the east-end (so needy for green space), 18 hectares of L'Anse-à-l'Orme forest, Beaconsfield's Angell Woods, the southern portions of Bois-Franc, lands adjacent Bois-de-l'Île-Bizard, parcels of land on the northern slopes of Mount Royal, shorelines along the Rapides-du-Cheval-Blanc, as well as lands on a number of islands. Protection for the historical and natural heritage of the riverside region of the Lachine Rapids should be guaranteed. Lastly, but very importantly, Meadowbrook is an ecosystem that must be saved.

Tribute This writing is offered as tribute to all who are part of Montreal's green space story - past and present, men and women, and children too, who give freely their support, time and energies. Space has permitted the mention of just a few individuals and member-groups, representatives of the many thousands who are resolved to conserve, protect and enhance our cherished Montreal environment.

Epilogue

No green space dollars

Finally buttonholed at a social event on January 14, Minister André Boisclair confirmed that there would be no money for green space purchases in the *Contrat de ville*. Despite pleas to him as Minister for the Métropole and as Minister of the Environment to “put something on the table” (ie. funds to be matched by the City) he brushed aside the Green Coalition's concerns. On January 27, one of the very coldest nights of the year, green space defenders rallied to City Council calling for green space dollars. The Mayor's responses were very encouraging and were the most definitive to date. He stated that his team is committed to boosting the amounts of protected green space to 8% of Montreal's territory and that this would require investments of between \$100 and \$200 million. The Mayor emphasized that the Quebec government is insisting that the 8% norm be met. He also said that these targets must be achieved to serve “all Montrealers – as represented by the Green Coalition”! On Friday, January 31, the *Contrat de ville* was signed by Minister André Boisclair and Mayor Gérald Tremblay. There were no green space dollars.

*Île-aux-Chats in
Rivière-des-Prairies,
part of Bois-de-
Saraguay Nature-
Park; mouth of
Bertrand Creek in
foreground¹⁵*



¹⁵ Green Coalition Archives