

LES AMIS DE LA MONTAGNE

CONSULTATIONS PUBLIQUES

December 2, 2003

NOTRE DAME DES NEIGES CEMETERY MASTER PLAN

MY NAME IS PETER HOWLETT. I AM THE PRESIDENT OF LES AMIS DE LA MONTAGNE. THE FOLLOWING IS A STATEMENT OF POSITION AND A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO OUR MÉMOIRE.

- This consultation is a cause for rejoicing. It is an exercise in citizenship that bears positive witness to how Montrealers value their community and each other.
- The Cemetery has deposited a master plan for consideration. All the attention however has focused on one element of that plan, the mausoleum.
- The Cemetery represents a most important asset and service to our community. This is indisputable.
- The Cemetery is found in the *noyau vert* of the city, it occupies what is arguably the very heart of one of the most critical sites in urban North America.
- The Cemetery has made a masterful and sophisticated presentation; by most accounts the supporting documentation presented is of quality.
- In its presentation the Cemetery has declared its commitment to the highest standards of conservation and protection of the environment and suggested that its plan and the elements of that plan abide by these high standards.
- The community is called to participate in a process that will judge the merits of a plan that will affect an area that is as important as that found in any urban environment. The sensitivity of the site calls for an assessment based on the highest measures – particularly as the proposed constructions are of such size, visibility and influence. The burden is therefore considerable on the proponent to justify this plan.
- There are powerful reasons to support the well being of the Cemetery (personal and otherwise). These are strong reasons to collaborate in the organization's reasonable desire to maintain its role in the service of the community.
- This process, one of the first, will in some degree establish the sincerity with which issues of the kind will be treated in the future. It will send a signal to other proponents and participants of what to expect from a *consultation publique*.

- It is therefore difficult to accept the “ultimate end game” approach taken by the Cemetery in its presentation.
- The Cemetery’s principle argument is that the financial capacity to manage its affairs and to execute the master plan, depend uniquely on the construction of the mausoleums.
- The Cemetery has refused to provide essential information which would support this economic and “business” argument for the construction it wants to carry out.
- No alternative is presented.
- This is disappointing as it defeats to a large degree the very purpose of the consultations because the principal argument advanced by the Cemetery goes unsupported and the participants in this consultation, both the panel and the witnesses, are precluded from exercising proper diligence in preparing their assessments.
- In demanding that their arguments be taken on trust alone, the Cemetery is marginalizing the “consultants” and defeating the consultation.
- As an organization committed to the principle of consultation, *Les Amis* must challenge this performance of the Cemetery.
- We cannot accept that the community, called upon to participate in such an important review, is prohibited from acquitting its responsibilities in an informed manner.
- The Cemetery made principally a commercial case to support its plan but is unwilling to provide the information that, in much less demanding circumstances, would be essential to secure support for its case.
- We are all willing collaborators in the well being of the Cemetery but as citizen proprietors of the most important legacy of all Montrealers we cannot, for the reasons cited, truly participate in this process. We are not therefore in a position, for this reason alone, to agree to the approvals requested by the Cemetery.

**MADAME SYLVIE GUILBAULT, DIRECTRICE GÉNÉRALE DE LES AMIS DE LA MONTAGNE,
WILL PRESENT THE MÉMOIRE OF *LES AMIS*.**