



Immediate Release

Cannon must give teeth to Gatineau Park Bill

Chelsea, June 8, 2009 – The Gatineau Park Protection Committee is pressing Pontiac MP Lawrence Cannon to give his long-awaited park legislation the teeth needed to do the job properly.

“Any legislation the minister tables to protect Gatineau Park must do two things: it must set park boundaries and prevent all residential development inside them,” today said GPPC co-chair Andrew McDermott. “Otherwise, his bill won’t be worth the paper it’s written on, since we’ll see more urbanization and more selloffs of park land,” he added.

The GPPC was commenting on a media advisory issued today by the minister’s office saying he plans to make a major announcement about the National Capital Commission and the National Capital Act at 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday June 9 at the Chelsea Library.

“The overwhelming majority of citizens want legislative protection for Gatineau Park, and the minister must put the public interest first and not cave in to the special interests that have so far denied this much-needed protection,” said Mr. McDermott. “The only real difference between Gatineau Park and national parks is private property and Mr. Cannon must deal with this issue head on,” he added.

Gatineau Park is the sole federal park that isn’t a national park, and in the absence of proper legal protection the National Capital Commission has removed nearly eight square kilometers of its territory, while allowing construction of 118 new houses and 5 new roads inside it. Although the NCC is mandated to acquire all private lands in the park, it has allowed residential construction inside it, thereby tremendously increasing the eventual cost to taxpayers.

“And besides legislating boundaries and preventing development, Mr. Cannon’s bill must recognize and respect Quebec’s territorial integrity by obtaining the province’s approval for any changes designed to expand the park,” said Mr. McDermott.

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Backgrounder

Portrait of an ideal Gatineau Park Bill

To fully address the problems facing Gatineau Park –fragmentation and urbanization – any legislation proposed by Pontiac MP Lawrence Cannon must satisfy the criteria listed below. Otherwise, it runs the risk of being seen as a half measure, “a temple raised up to the cult of mediocrity ...”

1) Provide legislated boundaries for Gatineau Park. Changes to reduce the size of the park must be approved by Act of Parliament, while changes to expand the park must be made only with approval from the Quebec government to ensure respect for the province’s territorial integrity.

2) Prevent removal of any land from Gatineau Park by Order in Council or other administrative means. Properties must only be removed from the park through Act of Parliament – in the spirit of protection given national parks since passage of the 1930 National Parks Act.

3) Ensure the prohibition or severe limitation of any residential construction through means such as giving the NCC a right of first refusal over any property sales/subdivisions, direct purchase and even expropriation if need be.