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27 August 2013

## **Brief on the Montreal Development Plan**

### **‘Demain Montréal – Montreal Tomorrow’**

#### **Preliminary Version for Discussion (revised April 2013)**

**Presented to l’Office de consultation publique de Montréal on behalf of the Green Coalition/Coalition Verte by Gareth Richardson, Vice President.**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Green Coalition (GC) is a non-profit association of grassroots volunteers. Its member-groups and individual members are dedicated to the conservation, protection and restoration of the environment. Members are actively involved in many issues such as saving Montreal's last natural green spaces, preventing road building through established Nature-Parks and other green spaces, boosting public transit strategies; promoting alternatives to pesticides, pressing for the clean-up of waste-water runoff and polluted creeks, and for responsible waste reduction and management. In short, the GC is working vigorously in Montreal, to shape a sustainable city.

The GC is thus pleased to find most of these issues acknowledged in the Plan. These comments begin with an analysis of the plan to identify areas of specific interest to the GC followed by an elaboration of the priorities of the GC in these areas.

## **ANALYSIS OF THE PLAN**

### **Themes**

The Plan is to be consistent with the Plan métropolitain d'aménagement et de développement (PMAD) of the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM) – summary p2

Montréal is to be renewed by applying sustainable development principles – summary p2

The three key development directions are identified as:

- Living & growing up in Montréal – summary p3
- Working & studying in Montréal – summary p4
- Shaping the city.- summary p5

### **Elements of the Plan of particular interest to the Green Coalition**

Development Principles - summary p2

- A compact city that promotes the proximity of residences, employment, services and leisure activities.
- Develop public transit and active transportation.
- Highlight natural spaces.
- Promote urban agriculture.
- Reduce greenhouse gases.
- Adapt to climate change.
- Increase biodiversity.

Working & Studying in Montréal - summary p4

- Increase up to 55% the proportion of travel by public transportation
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30%.

Living and Growing up in Montreal – summary p3

- Creating a healthy and safe place to live i.e. less pollution

#### Shaping the City - Summary p5

- Focus on sustainable development.
- Enhance natural habitats.
- The goal first of all must be to encourage biodiversity and efforts to green the city in particular by planting trees.
- Reduce impact of urban heat islands.
- Improve rainwater management and organic waste water treatment.

#### Municipal Action Plan (2013-2017)

Encourage the development of the downtown area through quality public spaces and design – summary p6

Triennial Capital Expenditure Program (TCEP) (2013-2017) \$275M includes:

- Development of an urban promenade between Mount Royal and the St. Lawrence River. \$6.3M

Improve the range and quality of municipal public facilities - summary p9

TCEP (2013-2017) \$378M

- Establish new service yards and eco-centres as well as treatment infrastructures for organic waste material and a pre-treatment centre for household waste. \$108.6M

Greening of neighbourhoods – summary p9

Make a sustained effort with regard to planting trees and their protection as well as for the preservation of natural environment of interest.

Increase the urban canopy index from 20% to 25% by 2025.

TCEP (2013-2017) \$198.4M includes:

- Protection of the natural environment. \$45.1M
- Creation of urban promenades. \$6.3M
- Increase of canopy index by 5%.

Determine Adequate funding for infrastructure projects, rolling stock and operating budgets of public transportation on a recurring basis - summary p10 includes:

- Increase the number of trips made using public transit by 40% by 2020

Promote and ensure the security of pedestrian and bicycle travel - summary p10

Increase the modal share of active transportation on the island from 15% to 18% by 2020 – summary p10

TCEP (2013-2017) \$60.1M includes:

- Improvement of bicycle path network. \$39.5M
- Installation of traffic calming measures. \$8.1M
- Development of public and private spaces to ensure pedestrian comfort. \$10.0M

- Improvement of pedestrian traffic. \$2.5M

### **Problematic elements of the Plan**

Promote residential growth - summary P3

Make urban projects a reality - summary p6

TCEP (2013-2017) \$60.1M includes:

- Pierrefonds-West. \$6.5M

### **GREEN COALITION PRIORITIES**

#### **Preserve remaining natural spaces and conserve and enhance biodiversity**

The Montréal Agglomeration must proceed with urgency to safeguard the remaining natural spaces on the island. As acknowledged in the Plan the current total of protected terrestrial areas stands at only 5.4% (2682 ha) against targets of 6% (3000 ha) terrestrial and 8% total set by the Natural Habitats Policy (ref. 4). Bearing in mind that the total stood at 3% when the policy came into force and that 0.9% of the increase has been obtained by re-classifying areas within existing parks only 1.3% (636 ha) new protected habitat has been gained in the last 9 years during which time potential additional sites have continued to be lost. This is despite allocations of the order of \$12M per year in previous versions of the TCEP for acquisition and management of natural habitat. Although the record indicates a sum of around \$35M had been expended between 2004 and January 2011 the GC can find no evidence of additional spending since then either on further acquisition or development of new Nature Parks such as that planned for the Rapides du Cheval Blanc site in Pierrefonds-Roxboro. Furthermore the promised Directory of Natural Habitats provided for in resolution CG09 0515 of the Agglomeration Council adopted 17 December 2009 has not yet been forthcoming.

Even though the potential for protecting undisturbed natural habitat remaining on the island is relatively small, Montreal and the other members of the Agglomeration must do their part in support of objective 3.1 of the PMAD (ref 1) which is to achieve the internationally agreed Aichi Biodiversity target of 17% protected area. This can be achieved by a combination of rapid action to preserve existing natural areas and the rehabilitation of degraded areas of which there exists a large supply.

In particular the Plan should support the PMAD objective of the creation of a Green and Blue Belt for the Montreal region as described in the document 'La Trame verte et Bleue du grand Montréal' (ref. 2) which originated as a proposal from the GC and its partners for a 'Parc Écologique de l'Archipel de Montréal'.

#### **Ensure that development is sustainable**

The GC is pleased to see a call for a focus on sustainability included in the Plan but there will be a significant challenge in reconciling the predicted expansion of the population with the principles of sustainable development including the following actions from the Montreal Sustainable Development plan (ref. 3).

- Action 31: Establish a collaborative framework for protecting and developing highly biodiverse territories.
- Action 32: Make use of green infrastructures and ecological services in the city.

- Action 33: Publish information to raise awareness of biodiversity and encourage the public to protect it.
- Action 34: Reinforce the eco-friendly management of the city's green spaces

Business as usual will not achieve sustainability. A new development paradigm is required at all levels of the city administration to ensure that all new developments, both public and private, are tested against sustainability criteria before being allowed to proceed.

### **Preserve remaining agricultural land.**

Montreal must do its part to support the CMM objective of increasing the cultivated area by 6% in support of objective 1.3 of the PMAD (ref. 1).

Proposed greenfield developments such as those in Western Pierrefonds and Eastern Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue will result in the loss of many hectares of prime agricultural land.

### **Build on brownfields not greenfields**

Proposed green field developments to support increased population such as that in Western Pierrefonds are in conflict with several other objectives of the Plan, namely protection of natural spaces, encouraging urban agriculture, avoidance of heat islands. Montreal has a large amount of brown field land that could be rehabilitated for both construction and re-greening. Decontaminated sites could be held in a land bank to be exchanged for more ecologically values land when the opportunity arises.

### **Re-naturalise degraded areas**

It is vital to include specific provisions in the plan to re-establish natural areas on brownfield sites and degraded open areas and link them to already preserved areas with green corridors.

### **Adapt to Climate Change**

Although the Plan acknowledges the need for action to mitigate the effects of climate change including higher summer temperatures, increased precipitation and more violent storms the action plan it does not make clear the urgency of the problem and the need for immediate action. Implementation of the Tree Policy (ref. 5) and better rainwater management will help, but the first priority should be to preserve and enhance existing vegetated areas and wetlands that both provide vital buffers for flood waters and reduce local temperatures.

### **Increase use of public & active transport**

The GC supports the objective of increasing the use of public transit and active transportation. A key challenge will be to persuade more of the population that public transit is a convenient and comfortable alternative to commuting on congested roads and that active transportation is practical year round even in the Montréal.

The proposed development in the far West is not properly supported by any existing or planned public transportation infrastructure and so cannot be considered Transit Oriented Development as advocated by the PMAD. The proposed urban boulevard on the highway 440 extension right of way will serve only to increase traffic on an already congested highway 40. This could be at least partially alleviated by developing a light rail system on the Doney Spur right of way that branches off the Deux-Montagnes commuter

line at Highway 13 and runs to Fairview in the West Island, a measure long advocated by the GC.

### **Improve Waste Management**

Although the plan acknowledges the need for improved waste management and allocates money for organic waste treatment infrastructure it does not set specific goals for reducing the proportion of waste sent to landfills which represents a completely unsustainable solution to the problem.

### **Develop Urban Promenades**

The GC strongly endorse the concept of Urban Promenades as set out the document 'Promenade urbaine la vision' (ref. 6) as providing a vehicle for re-greening the most densely populated areas of the city, providing at least some contact with the natural world and reducing the heat island effect.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Whilst the GC supports many of the principles stated in the Plan we find the Action Plan lacking in specific measures to achieve them. In particular the Plan does not acknowledge the urgent need for action to safeguard what remains of our natural heritage, the biodiversity it supports and the essential ecosystem services it provides.

## **REFERENCES**

1. Plan métropolitain d'aménagement et de développement (PMAD). Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal 2011.
2. La Trame verte et bleue du grand Montréal. Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal 2013.
3. Montréal Community Sustainable Development Plan 2010-2015. Ville de Montréal 2010.
4. Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats. Ville de Montréal 2004.
5. Tree Policy of Montreal. Ville de Montréal 2005.
6. Promenade urbaines la vision. Ville de Montréal 2012.