



**Immediate Release**

**Bill to Protect Gatineau Park Tabled in Commons**

**Chelsea, April 22, 2009** –The Gatineau Park Protection Committee is commending Ottawa-Centre MP Paul Dewar for introducing a bill that would give Gatineau Park the legal status needed to ensure its long-term protection.

“Gatineau Park is the only federal park that isn’t a national park, and Bill C-367 will provide it with the same legal protection and parliamentary oversight enjoyed by all other Canadian parks,” today said GPPC Co-Chair Andrew McDermott. “Such action is long overdue, and Mr. Dewar’s initiative is giving environmentalists everywhere good reason to celebrate Earth Day,” said Mr. McDermott.

For nearly forty years, concerned citizens and environmental groups have requested that Gatineau Park be given legal status to protect it from unsuitable encroachments, developments and sell offs. In the absence of such protection, the National Capital Commission (NCC), which runs the park, has removed nearly eight square kilometres of park land, while allowing construction of 118 new houses and 5 new roads within its boundaries.

“The NCC has proven time and again it can’t be trusted to administer Gatineau Park without parliamentary oversight: it has sold off park land, destroyed historically significant buildings, misrepresented park history, and failed to assert its authority over the park,” said Mr. McDermott. “So Mr. Dewar deserves high praise for this latest attempt to put order where confusion and anarchy have been running wild,” Mr. McDermott said.

This is Mr. Dewar’s second attempt to provide Gatineau Park with protective legislation. The principles of this bill have drawn widespread support from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, as well as from Conservative, Liberal and New Democratic parliamentarians.

Bill C-367 is the latest incarnation of a measure first tabled in the Commons by the Honourable Ed Broadbent in November 2005. It would amend the National Capital Act to include the park’s boundaries, provide the NCC with a right of first refusal on private property sales in the park, and ensure its territory can only be reduced by Act of Parliament.

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**Backgrounder**  
**Paul Dewar's Bill: Amending the National Capital Act**

Largely inspired by the National Parks Act,<sup>1</sup> Mr. Dewar's bill would amend various sections of the National Capital Act, and do basically four things:

1) Provide legislated boundaries for Gatineau Park. Changes to reduce the size of the park would have to be approved by Act of Parliament, while changes to expand the park could be made by Order in Council.

2) Prevent removal of any land from Gatineau Park by Order in Council or other administrative means. This bill provides that only an Act of Parliament could remove properties from the park. This is in the spirit of protection given to our national parks since passage of the 1930 National Parks Act.

3) Create a mechanism for expanding the park should the government choose to do so. Any expansion would require an agreement between the federal government and the Province of Quebec, public consultations and the concurrence of Parliament. Committees from both houses of Parliament would have 30 sitting days to examine the proposal, and it would proceed only with consent from both houses.

4) Recognize that much of Gatineau Park remains in private hands and that one of the duties of the National Capital Commission is to gradually acquire it. The bill provides that all private property owners wishing to sell their holdings in the park must give the NCC a right of first refusal.

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<sup>1</sup> More specifically, by various parts of sections 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13 and 16 of the National Parks Act.