



**Immediate Release**

**Senior Transport Official Misleads Commons Committee**

**Chelsea, December 8, 2009** – The Gatineau Park Protection Committee is condemning senior Transport Canada Official Simon Dubé for misleading a Commons committee while testifying on Bill C-37, the government’s so-called Action Plan on the National Capital.

Mr. Dubé, Director of Portfolio Management with Transport Canada, misled members of the Commons Transport Committee on Monday, December 7 while testifying during clause-by-clause study of Bill C-37. Also appearing with Mr. Dubé were Assistant Deputy Minister for Corporate Services André Morency and two Transport Canada lawyers.

Below is the text of the email GPPC Co-chair Jean-Paul Murray sent Mr. Dubé today, rebuking him for his gaffe:

*“The low point of your testimony yesterday occurred at about 4:25 pm, when you misled the Transport committee, by uttering the following inanity:*

*‘[The NCC is] not specifically mandated to purchase property within Gatineau Park.’*

*Like, it’s only been a keystone of every Gatineau Park Master Plan, of two Gréber reports, not to mention a Treasury Board directive (8094640), an order in council (PC 2008-1604), as well as Sections 10. (2) (a) and (c) of the National Capital Act (“**acquire, hold, administer or develop property**”); “**construct, maintain and operate parks,**” etc.)*

*You also erred in saying the National Interest Land mass is only a planning tool. According to an NCC document entitled, National Interest Land Mass: Federal Custodian User’s Guide, “The NILM concept is a major **implementation** tool for federal land use plans that aids the NCC in the exercise of this regulatory function” (p. 3).*

*Uttering falsehoods before a parliamentary committee is very embarrassing for a man in your position, not to mention for your minister.”*

“Whether Mr. Dubé deliberately misled the committee or did so out of ignorance or carelessness is for his superiors to determine,” said Mr. Murray. “The bottom line, however, is that his behaviour was contemptuous of Parliament and that he should be reprimanded in no uncertain terms,” he added.

The Transport Committee resumes study of Bill C-37 on Wednesday, December 9.

## **Backgrounder: Private Property in Gatineau Park Or Why Mr. Dubé's Comments Mised Parliamentarians**

A review of various plans and reports pertaining to Gatineau Park written since 1950 demonstrates that private property has long been seen as problematic in regard to park administration and that recommendations for its gradual removal are a recurring theme.

From the 1950 Gréber Plan, to the 1952 Report of the Advisory Committee on Gatineau Park, to the 1980, 1990 and 2005 Gatineau Park Master Plans, every study of this issue has described the presence of private property in Gatineau Park as being at odds with the park's mandate and vocation.

For instance, the 1980 Gatineau Park Master Plan argued that private lands within the park limited the possibilities of developing it for the benefit of visitors.<sup>1</sup> To remedy the situation, the 1980 Master Plan recommended the purchase of private properties, particularly those around Meech Lake.

In 1988, Treasury Board created the National Interest Land Mass (NILM), designating all lands in Gatineau Park as such, and targeting them for eventual acquisition. This designation relates to properties in the National Capital Region considered essential to the vision of the capital as well as to its integrity, symbolism and interpretation. Those lands are either owned by the federal government, or considered essential and earmarked for eventual acquisition.

According to the Treasury Board Web site, these lands are to be "held in trust for future generations." As well, an NCC document titled *About National Capital Commission Lands*, available on its Web site, says this about NILM: "On the basis of the 1988 Treasury Board NILM approval [...] the NCC was directed to acquire and consolidate non-federal lands identified as part of the NILM."

Moreover, in 1989, on the heels of the NILM's creation, the NCC set up a task force to establish criteria and a strategy to acquire private property in Gatineau Park. Identifying all private properties in the park, underlining that all of them had to be acquired, the Task Force drew up a list of those to be purchased on a priority basis.<sup>2</sup>

The 1990 Master Plan, for its part, was less exhaustive in its review of private properties than its 1980 predecessor had been, though it underlined that they created conflicts between residents and visitors and that the NCC should work towards acquiring them.<sup>3</sup> As well, the 1990 document stipulated that "the park is, and will remain, a public domain planned and managed for the benefit and enjoyment of the public at large."<sup>4</sup>

More recently, the 2005 Master Plan noted that over 200 private properties remained within the park, concentrated mainly in the Meech Lake, Kingsmere Lake and Skyridge sectors,

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<sup>1</sup> *Gatineau Park Master Plan*, National Capital Commission, Ottawa, 1980, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> NCC ATIP A-95/96-026, pp. 55-56.

<sup>3</sup> *Gatineau Park: a Master Plan for the '90s and Beyond*, National Capital Commission, Ottawa, 1990, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

that their presence made controlling park use difficult, and that acquiring them remained the NCC's long term goal.<sup>5</sup>

Although the 1980 Master Plan did not designate comprehensive categories for acquiring private property in Gatineau Park, its 1990 and 2005 successors did. The former recommended that the NCC place a high priority on properties subject to multi-unit developments, those that were environmentally sensitive, and those that were considered harmful to key park resources and assets.<sup>6</sup> As for the 2005 plan, it recommended that properties of ten or more acres and those located on waterfront be acquired on a priority basis.<sup>7</sup>

A review of the last three Gatineau Park Master Plans and the 1989 Task Force Report confirms that the NCC has been consistent in its commitments to acquire private property, particularly in the park's most heavily used area around Meech and Kingsmere Lakes. However, despite repeated NCC commitments, some 296 private properties consisting of 2,112.75 acres remain within the park, many of them on waterfront around Meech and Kingsmere Lakes. Besides, the NCC has acquired very few of the properties that have been on the market at Meech and Kingsmere Lakes over the past three years – despite having declared in successive Master Plans that waterfront properties had to be acquired on a priority basis.

Moreover, several large private properties remain inside Gatineau Park which may fall prey to major subdivisions. The NCC is mandated to acquire all private lands in the park, and allowing development inside it only means the serious mortgaging of our future. The proposed Carman Road Development in Gatineau Park is a case in point. Although the government stopped the development, it only did so after considerable protest from park advocates.

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<sup>5</sup> *Gatineau Park Master Plan*, National Capital Commission, Ottawa, 2005, p. 52.

<sup>6</sup> *Gatineau Park: a Master Plan for the '90s and Beyond*, *ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> *Gatineau Park Master Plan*, National Capital Commission, Ottawa, 2005, p. 52.