



Immediate Release

Gatineau Park Protection Scores Huge Victory

Chelsea, March 20, 2009 – The Gatineau Park Protection Committee is celebrating the latest victory in its campaign to protect the park and secure rightful ownership of a 61.5 km² patch of land inside it.

“The brief and motion to intervene we sent to Quebec’s Administrative Tribunal persuaded the provincial government it was wrong in claiming it didn’t have to pay taxes on a parcel of land inside the park that’s home to the Outaouais Cégep,” today said GPPC co-chair Andrew McDermott.

“On two occasions, the province asked the City of Gatineau to strike its name from the tax assessment roll as owner of the Cégep lands, wrongly arguing they belonged to the National Capital Commission,” said Mr. McDermott. “And the NCC played along with this charade, abetting the anarchy that runs through Gatineau Park management in general,” he added.

The Quebec government had appealed the City of Gatineau’s decision before the Quebec Administrative Tribunal. However, the province withdrew the appeal today during a teleconference set up by Tribunal vice president Guy Gagnon.

For several years, the Quebec government had argued that the Outaouais Cégep lands belonged to the NCC, and that the 1973 land exchange agreement between the province and federal government was not valid because the titles had never been registered. That agreement had transferred 12,500 acres of bush land surrounding Lac la Pêche inside Gatineau Park to the federal government in exchange for 67.6 acres in downtown Hull.

“The province’s argument that the titles had never been properly registered was completely bogus, as we demonstrated in our December 18th letter to the Tribunal,” Mr. McDermott said. “In federal-provincial land exchanges, titles don’t have to be registered; all that passes is duty to control and manage the lands,” he added.

In its March 9th motion to intervene, the GPPC had noted that the uncertainty maintained by the province and the NCC created an administrative vacuum in the park, to the point that the park’s lakes were being polluted and houses were being built on the lakebed at Meech Lake.

“Since confusion on this matter has now been dissipated, the NCC will be in a position to manage the park more rationally by properly asserting its authority and ownership over it,” Mr. McDermott said. “But it will have to explain why it misled the public into believing the province owned the lac La Pêche lands in its latest master plan – and on several other occasions,” he concluded.