

You thought it was Gatineau "Park"? Think again

April 21, 2008

Ottawa – On the eve of Earth Day 2008, the Ottawa Valley chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS-OV) is releasing a new booklet for decision-makers and park enthusiasts on the perilous status of a wilderness area north of Ottawa – known to many as "Gatineau Park."

The 361-km² parcel of land is a much-loved recreational haven for the people of Ottawa-Gatineau and one of the most beautiful pieces of wilderness held in trust for Canadians. It's also a shelter for 23 endangered species. But because its boundaries aren't etched in any law, this "park" we enjoy can be eroded away – sold piecemeal, developed or paved over with roads at the will of its managing body, the National Capital Commission. Without legal protection, it's just another piece of pretty landscape near a big city, easily threatened by development – not a park to be enjoyed by our grandchildren.

The CPAWS-OV booklet illuminates the park's many beauties and its incredible vulnerability. Destined for decision-makers in the federal, provincial and municipal governments and agencies as well as park supporters, the booklet clearly sets out steps that need to be taken to make a reality of the name "Gatineau Park." Among other things, it calls on decision-makers to:

1. Freeze development within the park
2. Pass a law that will fix the park's boundaries in law, requiring the NCC to get Parliament's approval to sell or develop land
3. Hold the NCC to its promise to make buying land within the park precinct and on its margins a priority
4. Start the process for making Gatineau Park a *real* park by bringing it under the *National Parks Act*

CPAWS-OV is encouraged by recent promises from the NCC and the federal minister responsible for the Commission, Lawrence Canon, to start taking these steps. But threats to the park are moving fast. The recent plan to build a housing subdivision at Carman Road - inside the park - and the large swath cut directly through the southern tip of the park by the new boulevard des Allumettières are upsetting examples of the many ways the park is threatened.

This Earth Day, CPAWS-OV is calling on decision-makers to make the right decisions, right here on the doorstep of the nation's capital – and protect our Gatineau Park!