



**Greenbelt Coalition of Canada's Capital Region**  
**Coalition de la ceinture de verdure de la Région de la capitale du Canada**

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **NCC's commitment to Greenbelt to be tested**

For the last two years the National Capital Commission (NCC) has steadfastly refused to approve any development or infrastructure projects in the National Capital Greenbelt on the grounds that they are in the process of undertaking a Review of the 1996 Greenbelt Master Plan with extensive public consultations, and they did not want to compromise this process. The Master Plan Review began in 2008, and will be completed in 2011.

In spite of this, now the Ottawa Airport Authority and the Shenkman Corporation, with the support of City of Ottawa staff, have sought to do an end-run around federal-level protections of the Greenbelt through a municipal administrative mechanism, the City of Ottawa's Committee of Adjustment. They are seeking a so-called "minor variance" for a 220,000 square foot Trade Show and Convention Centre with parking for 2,000 cars on a 29 acre wooded wetland site adjacent to the Airport Parkway inside the boundaries of the Greenbelt. It is the Greenbelt Coalition's position that the magnitude of the proposed project is anything but "minor". As well, any decision to alter the character of the lands in question cannot be classified as "minor". "In fact, this represents a major policy decision with long term impacts and consequences across the city." says Sol Shuster, Chair of the Greenbelt Coalition of Canada's Capital Region. "It surely should have gone to the City's Planning and Environment Committee for public review and input."

In addition, neither the Airport Authority nor the developer has received formal approval from the NCC.

At the September 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Committee of Adjustment after environmental and community groups and individuals expressed strong opposition to the application, the Committee voted to adjourn this minor variance application until September 15<sup>th</sup> so that the proponent can provide a letter from the NCC acknowledging it does not have any issues with this development within the Greenbelt.

The ball is now in the NCC's court. The land in question is clearly wooded wetland. Early maps of the area identify this as one of the wettest parts of what was then the Leitrim Wetland complex. Albert Dugal, a well known botanist, has surveyed the site and confirms this is a wetland. "I have already identified over 30 wetland species on this site" says Dugal. The Federal Wetlands Conservation Policy calls for "no net loss of wetlands on federal lands". Furthermore, this wetland is habitat for a number of turtle species, including the Species at Risk (SAR) Blanding's Turtles and Snapping Turtle. Cheryl Doran adds: "Even the minimal provincial rules that protect the species but not their habitat can't seem to be met: Nine dead turtles were found last month alone, killed by cars on one stretch of the roadway adjacent this proposed development."

The Shenkman-Ottawa Airport Authority proposal is being opposed by the 14 member groups of the Greenbelt Coalition ([www.greenbeltcoalition.ca](http://www.greenbeltcoalition.ca)). The organizations are not against a Trade Show Centre per se. "The location is problematic", according to Nicole Desroches, Co-chair of the Coalition, "not only because of the wetlands, but closer to downtown would provide a more readily available access by public transit and avoids creating a field of parking used only occasionally".

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