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15 novembre - Grave incendie aux Ateliers Alstom à la Pointe-Saint-Charles – Communiqué de presse – Arrondissement Sud-Ouest

MONTREAL, le 15 nov. /CNW Telbec/ - Un grave incendie a détruit, la nuit dernière, une partie des Ateliers Alstom situés sur le site des anciens ateliers du CN à la Pointe-Saint-Charles.

Ce site, en voie de réhabilitation, a été acquis par le Groupe Mach en 2006. Il fait présentement l'objet d'une démarche participative de concertation menée par l'Office de consultation publique de Montréal en vue d'élaborer un plan d'ensemble répondant le mieux possible aux attentes et préoccupations de la communauté et des instances municipales.

"Cet incendie est d'autant plus déplorable, indique la mairesse, madame Jacqueline Montpetit, que la population de ce secteur de l'arrondissement du Sud-Ouest est particulièrement préoccupée par la vocation future du site qui a toujours eu une place prépondérante dans son histoire. Les bâtiments industriels incendiés avaient également une grande valeur patrimoniale, de déplorer madame Montpetit."

La mairesse loue les efforts accomplis par le Service des incendies de Montréal qui a rapidement dressé un périmètre de sécurité. Une enquête est présentement en cours pour déterminer l'origine de l'incendie.

Rappelons que, depuis peu, l'édifice incendié servait d'entrepôt à un important lot de ballots de papier, une activité non conforme à l'usage autorisé sur le site. En juillet dernier, l'arrondissement demandait au propriétaire de régulariser l'occupation du site dans un délai de 90 jours.

Avant cette échéance et constatant la difficulté pour les occupants de se conformer aux délais prescrits, l'arrondissement a renforcé ses mesures de pression pour forcer l'évacuation des ballots concernés.

Des pourparlers intensifs étaient présentement en cours pour encadrer la sortie de cette importante quantité de ballots de papier avec en tête une préoccupation sur l'impact de la circulation générée par cette opération sur les citoyens du quartier.

Rappelons que depuis le début des activités liées à la réhabilitation du site, les citoyens avaient, à de nombreuses reprises, soulevé des inquiétudes quant à leur impact particulièrement sur le plan de la circulation. Dans un souci de bien les informer, l'arrondissement du Sud-Ouest avait, en juillet dernier, émis un bulletin d'information dans lequel il était notamment question de cette occupation non conforme des lieux et des mesures qu'il comptait mettre de l'avant.

Renseignements: Constance Lauzon, Chef de division des communications, Arrondissement du Sud-Ouest, (514) 349-0450; Nicole Boudreau, Cabinet de la mairesse, Arrondissement du Sud-Ouest, (514) 603-0027

15 novembre - Walls collapse as fire rages at Montreal paper recycling plant – CBC News

Witness reports seven-storey-high flames



Firefighters had to remain outside after the walls collapsed during a five-alarm fire at a paper recycling plant in Montreal's Pointe St. Charles neighbourhood on Saturday. (CBC) Plumes of smoke and ash floated high in the sky over a five-alarm fire at a paper recycling plant in Montreal's Pointe St. Charles neighbourhood on Saturday.

Benoit Fleury, chief of operations of the Montreal Fire Department, said firefighters were forced to remain outside because some of the building's walls had collapsed.

"It is all compact paper, so we can't get inside. As soon as the plows are able to move the paper from inside the building, then it is going to be easier for us to extinguish the fire," he said.



Some of the building's walls collapsed during a fire at a paper recycling plant in Montreal on Saturday. (CBC)

Mario Cournoyer, who lives down the street, said he could feel the heat and saw flames that appeared seven storeys high.

The building was empty when the fire started around 2 a.m. ET in the southwestern part of the city, Fleury said.

"With the paper, and wood — the pallets — it spread really quickly," he said.

More than 120 firefighters worked through the night. Officials said it could be a full day before they put out all the flames.

Firefighters closed some streets in the area, but said evacuations were not necessary.

It's too soon to say what caused the fire, they said.

16 novembre - Fire in Point surprises no one – The Gazette – Paul Cherry and Linda Gyulai

Recycling warehouse. Borough had ordered firm to empty building of paper

It was an accident waiting to happen.

That is the consensus of many residents in Point St. Charles who watched with dismay yesterday as a derelict building in the former CN rail yards everyone knew was a fire hazard went up in flames.

There were no injuries, the fire department said.

Area residents say the building on Le Ber St. was packed with paper even though the owners, Les Cours Pointe St. Charles, and a company that was using it to store paper were ordered to empty it by the end of October.

"It's a miracle no one's home was destroyed," said a resident who was part of a group that pushed their city borough to have the derelict building emptied. The resident, who spoke on condition that no name be used, alleged that paper was still being trucked to the building until Oct. 20.

Lisa Ferland, who lives in Point St. Charles and is a member of Action Gardien, a coalition of community groups, said paper began being warehoused in the building two years ago.

Action Gardien was particularly opposed to the number of trucks that rumbled through the residential neighbourhood on their way to the former CN yards.

"Questions started being raised regularly by residents. They wanted to know what was going on in these warehouses. They criticized it as not being safe. According to us, it did not seem safe. They were keeping paper in a building with no security measures and it was close to houses." A newsletter issued by the Southwest borough in July, following

an inspection by firefighters, stated that the large-scale storage of paper by Montreal-based paper recovery company JC Fibers "conflicted with building usage and conformity bylaw." According to the same newsletter, the building's owners and JC Fibers were summoned "to put an end to these operations. JC Fibers was ordered to empty the building within 90 days, bringing the deadline to the end of October." Reached by phone yesterday, Joe Colubriale, president of JC Fibers, said the company would comment tomorrow. But he did confirm that his firm was renting space in the building.

Vincent Chiara, a Montreal lawyer and real-estate developer who is president of Les Cours Point St. Charles and Groupe Mach, the company planning to redevelop the Canadian National rail yards, could not be reached for comment.

The Southwest borough was on the verge of issuing fines to Chiara, borough mayor Jacqueline Montpetit said.

"Tensions were very high because we wanted him to get the material out," she said.

Montpetit added when the borough learned in September that Chiara had not started to cart away any of the material, it warned him again. Montpetit said she had recently heard that paper was still being delivered to the facility.

"We hadn't set the amount of the fine yet, but it wasn't going to be symbolic," she said.

The building was equipped with sprinklers, Montpetit said, but added she doesn't know whether the water was connected.

The borough will now focus on getting the owner to secure the site and clean it up, she said.

Montpetit said a phone call from the fire department roused her out of bed around 2:15 a.m. She then rushed to the blazing building, she said.

"When they told me where the fire was, I felt horror," she said.

"You can't imagine how attached we were to the building." The facility, which was originally built in 1942, boasted a 15-metre-high windowed ceiling.

The building sits on a sprawling 3.7-million-square-foot lot that used to serve as CN's rail yards.

"Everybody is in agreement that this is a heritage campus," Heritage Montreal program director Dinu Bumbaru said.

The CN shops on the site have been on Heritage Montreal's Top 10 endangered heritage sites since 2006.

The original buildings on the site were constructed in the 1850s to build the rolling stock for the Grand Trunk Railway. Some of the buildings later became maintenance shops.

CN sold the yards in 2006 to Chiara. The site is hemmed in and contaminated but located minutes from downtown.

In June, Chiara told The Gazette he planned to start developing the area in six to 12 months. Plans were in place to divide it into a residential and industrial zone with some community and social housing.

The issue of the building being a possible fire hazard was raised at a city public consultation meeting on Oct. 22 where residents raised questions about whether the building even had access to water.

According to a transcript of the meeting, available on the Office de consultation publique de Montréal's website, Normand Proulx, the borough's director of planning, told concerned residents there was little the borough could do.

Proulx estimated it would take "600 trucks" to remove all the paper from the building and that the borough was still trying to find a short-term solution. He also said JC Fiber was having trouble selling the paper "because the market is down." Firefighters were alerted to the fire at around 2 a.m. yesterday. Division chief Benoît Fleury of the Montreal fire department said it spread fast and was quickly classified as a five-alarm blaze. Fleury said there did appear to be a lot of paper inside the building at the time.

About 125 firefighters were called in to extinguish it, but flames were still visible 18 hours later and a thick column of smoke continued to billow out of the northern end of the building. Ash from the fire could be found on front lawns and cars parked four blocks away.

"Fortunately, it didn't spread to the neighbouring buildings on either side," Fleury said, adding fire officials were unable to determine how the fire started. "The scene has been turned over to the Montreal police." Fleury said it appeared no one was inside the building and none of the homes across the street from it had to be evacuated. He also said it was too early to determine whether the building was completely destroyed, although part of it collapsed.

"It's a loss for the neighbourhood because even though it was just a factory, it was a beautiful piece of architecture. To me it now looks like something from the Blitz in London," said area resident Donovan Reiter, in a reference to the Second World War aerial bombings of London.

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16 novembre - Un immeuble appartenant à Vincent Chiara s'embrase – La Presse – Philippe Orphali

(Montréal) Un bâtiment industriel de la rue Le Ber, à Pointe-Saint-Charles, où étaient entreposés illégalement des centaines de ballots de papier destinés au recyclage, s'est

embrasé vers 2h dans la nuit de vendredi à hier. L'incendie, qui a tenu les pompiers en haleine toute la journée, couvait toujours au moment de mettre sous presse, hier soir.

Le propriétaire de cet immeuble, situé sur d'anciens terrains du CN, est le promoteur immobilier et avocat Vincent Chiara. L'été dernier, la Ville de Montréal lui avait donné jusqu'au 31 octobre pour vider l'édifice. À l'arrondissement du Sud-Ouest, on reconnaît qu'aucune mesure n'avait été prise pour contraindre M. Chiara à enlever ce papier. «Nous n'en étions pas là. Nous l'avons averti en juillet, puis en septembre, puis en octobre», a indiqué la mairesse Jacqueline Montpetit.

«Tout le monde savait que la présence de ce papier dans un édifice de la sorte était très dangereuse. Nous étions inquiets et il fallait que les ballots sortent. Je vais attendre impatiemment le rapport de police», a ajouté Mme Montpetit.

En entrevue à *La Presse*, M. Chiara a affirmé que l'un de ses agents de sécurité avait vu un homme tout près du bâtiment, peu avant que celui-ci prenne feu. «Qui avait avantage à voir le bâtiment brûler? Personne. Nous n'avons pas d'assurances», a dit M. Chiara. La police de Montréal n'a pas été en mesure de confirmer cette information. «Nous avons des éléments qui nous permettent de croire que l'incendie n'était pas accidentel», a toutefois indiqué le chef des opérations du Service de prévention des incendies de Montréal, Benoît Fleury.

Acquis au prix de 1\$

Les ateliers ferroviaires où se trouvait l'immeuble détruit par l'incendie ont été construits au milieu du XIXe siècle. Dans les années 80, le CN a loué le terrain et les ateliers au groupe Alstom, avant de les vendre en 2006 à la Fiducie Mach, l'entreprise de M. Chiara, pour la somme de 1\$. Cette transaction avait suscité l'étonnement et l'indignation tant des citoyens du quartier que de la firme Canderel et Associés, dont l'offre de 20 millions avait été rejetée par le CN.

En mai 2007, le magnat immobilier avait indiqué sa volonté d'utiliser le quart des 325 000 mètres carrés du site à des fins résidentielles.

M. Chiara s'est porté acquéreur de plusieurs propriétés dans la région de Montréal au cours des dernières années. Fiducie Mach - nommée en l'honneur de ses enfants, Maria et Angelo Chiara - est actuellement évaluée à 1 milliard de dollars. Elle comptait faire des investissements évalués à 450 millions d'ici deux ans.

Avant de devenir promoteur immobilier, Vincent Chiara travaillait surtout comme avocat, une pratique qu'il a délaissée au cours des dernières années même s'il demeure membre du Barreau. Il a déjà été l'avocat des frères Caruana, des intermédiaires en transport de drogue et en blanchiment d'argent actifs à l'échelle de la planète. Il est notamment partenaire de la famille Saputo, avec laquelle il est copropriétaire de plusieurs édifices, dont la tour de la Bourse et la tour CIBC.

Avec Éric Clément et André Noël

16 novembre - Un entrepôt illégal de papier part en fumée à Montréal – Le Soleil

Montréal - Un bâtiment industriel de Pointe-Saint-Charles où étaient entreposés illégalement des centaines de ballots de papier destinés au recyclage s'est embrasé vers 2h dans la nuit de vendredi à hier. L'incendie, qui a tenu les pompiers en haleine toute la journée, couvait toujours au moment de mettre sous presse, hier soir. Le propriétaire de cet immeuble, situé sur d'anciens terrains du CN, est le promoteur immobilier et avocat Vincent Chiara. L'été dernier, la Ville de Montréal lui avait donné jusqu'au 31 octobre pour vider l'édifice.

À l'arrondissement du Sud-Ouest, on reconnaît qu'aucune mesure n'avait été prise afin de le contraindre à enlever ce papier. "Nous n'en étions pas là. Nous l'avons averti en juillet, puis en septembre, puis en octobre", a indiqué la mairesse Jacqueline Montpetit. En entrevue, M. Chiara a affirmé que l'un de ses agents de sécurité avait vu un homme près du bâtiment, peu avant que celui-ci prenne feu. "Qui avait avantage à voir le bâtiment brûler? Personne. Nous n'avions pas d'assurances", a dit M. Chiara. La police de Montréal n'a pas été en mesure de confirmer cette information. "Nous avons des éléments qui nous permettent de croire que l'incendie n'était pas accidentel", a toutefois indiqué le chef des opérations du Service de prévention des incendies de Montréal, Benoît Fleury.

En mai 2007, le magnat immobilier, qu'on a quelquefois lié à la mafia, avait indiqué sa volonté d'utiliser le quart des 325 000 mètres carrés du lieu à des fins résidentielles.

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17 novembre - Le feu détruit un bâtiment des anciens ateliers du CN – La Voix populaire – André Desroches



Un incendie a détruit un bâtiment situé sur le site des anciens ateliers du CN où étaient entreposés illégalement des ballots de papier destinés au recyclage.

Le feu détruit un bâtiment des anciens ateliers du CN

Chronique d'un sinistre annoncé? Ce que des résidents craignaient s'est produit. Un incendie a détruit un bâtiment industriel situé sur le site des anciens ateliers du CN, dans Pointe-Saint-Charles, où étaient entreposés illégalement des ballots de papier destinés au recyclage.

Les flammes ont pris naissance vers 2h dans la nuit du 14 au 15 novembre dans l'entrepôt de 450 000 pieds carrés.

Plus de 150 pompiers ont combattu le brasier pendant plus de quarante-huit heures.

On ne connaît pas l'origine de l'incendie. Le Service de police de la Ville de Montréal a ouvert une enquête

Le bâtiment, qui avait une valeur patrimoniale, était utilisé depuis l'an dernier par la compagnie Fibres JC pour l'entreposage de ballots de papier. Cette activité contrevenait à l'usage autorisé pour ce bâtiment.

L'arrondissement du Sud-Ouest a pris connaissance du problème quand des résidents

du secteur se sont plaints d'un va-et-vient incessant de camions.

Des citoyens et organismes regroupés au sein d'Action-Gardien – la Table de concertation communautaire de Pointe-Saint-Charles – ont en effet tiré la sonnette d'alarme, demandant à plusieurs reprises à l'arrondissement d'adopter des mesures afin que ça cesse.

«Bien que le camionnage lourd dans les rues résidentielles ait été au coeur des problèmes soulevés», l'utilisation du bâtiment «pour stocker des tonnes de papier n'était pas sans inquiéter les résidents voisins du site», rappelle la table Action-Gardien.

Un inspecteur de l'arrondissement s'est rendu sur les lieux pour constater que l'on y faisait du stockage de papier, une activité qui ne respectait pas le règlement de zonage, explique la mairesse de l'arrondissement, Jacqueline Montpetit. «Nous l'avons constaté en début d'été, dit-elle. Nous avons agi de façon très ferme.»

En juillet dernier, la direction de l'arrondissement a ordonné à l'entreprise de mettre fin à ses activités. On lui a donné un délai de 90 jours pour vider le bâtiment. La compagnie avait jusqu'au 31 octobre pour le faire. En septembre, voyant que l'entrepôt ne se vidait pas, l'arrondissement a recontacté l'entreprise pour lui rappeler qu'il ne lui restait qu'un mois pour se plier à l'ordonnance, signale Mme Montpetit.

«Des pourparlers intensifs étaient présentement en cours pour encadrer la sortie de cette importante quantité de ballots de papier avec en tête une préoccupation sur l'impact de la circulation générée par cette opération sur les citoyens du quartier», indique-t-on à l'arrondissement.

Constatant que les choses demeuraient au point mort, l'arrondissement s'apprêtait à franchir une nouvelle étape. «Nous en étions rendu aux amendes», mentionne la mairesse.

17 novembre - Incendie à Pointe-Saint-Charles Les pompiers encore à l'oeuvre près de 48 heures plus tard – La Presse – Philippe Orphali

Le spectaculaire incendie qui a ravagé un entrepôt illégal de papier à Pointe-Saint-Charles, samedi, occupait toujours une trentaine de pompiers, tard hier soir. "Le feu est maîtrisé depuis le milieu de la journée (d'hier), mais nous continuons à arroser. Des pelles mécaniques sont sur place afin de nous aider à nettoyer le terrain de tous les débris et résidus", a dit le porte-parole du Service de prévention des incendies, Richard Laporte. Le bâtiment industriel de la rue Le Ber, où étaient entreposés des centaines de ballots de papier, s'est embrasé vers 2h dans la nuit de vendredi à samedi. "Un incendie d'une telle ampleur, dans un édifice de cette taille et à une telle heure, c'est surprenant, et nous considérons l'incendie comme suspect. Les policiers sont sur les lieux et nous collaborons avec eux." La Presse a révélé hier que le propriétaire de cet immeuble situé sur d'anciens terrains du CN est le promoteur immobilier Vincent Chiara, également copropriétaire de la tour de la Bourse et de la tour CIBC. M. Chiara avait acheté ce terrain en 2006 pour la somme de 1\$. Cette transaction avait suscité l'étonnement, tant

des citoyens du quartier que de la firme Canderel et Associés, dont l'offre de 20 millions avait été rejetée.

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18 novembre - Point warehouse fire not my responsibility, owner insists – The Gazette – Linda Gyulai

Flames still not extinguished. Landlord says he was co-operating with borough to reduce stockpiled paper

LINDA GYULAI, The Gazette

As firefighters continued work yesterday to extinguish the flames that destroyed a Point St. Charles industrial building stuffed with recycled paper and cardboard on Saturday, the owner of the building said the borough and local residents having nothing to reproach him for.

Vincent Chiara, a Montreal lawyer and real-estate developer who's planning to redevelop the former Canadian National rail yards where the building is located, said it wasn't his responsibility to remove the material that the borough says was there in violation of local bylaws.

"I didn't put the paper in there," Chiara said. "I'm the landlord. I'm not the tenant.

"We were working in collaboration with the city to assure them that the tenant would leave and we assured them that we would not let him bring any more inventory into the (building)."

Chiara said he had a security guard 24 hours a day to watch the site, which had been attacked several times by vandals. The guard checked every truck on the site to ensure they are only carting away material.

Joe Colubriale, president of JC Fibers, the recycling company that was warehousing the material, did not call back yesterday. And the Chambly company said it was not commenting for the moment.

The Montreal fire department said yesterday it had transferred the investigation of the fire, which began shortly after 2 a.m. on Saturday, to the Montreal police because it was unable to determine the cause of the blaze.

Chiara said the fire department had previously inspected the building and found it had the requisite sprinklers and alarms.

Firefighters who were on the scene shortly after the fire broke out reported seeing sprinklers working inside the 450,000-square-foot building, said Aimé Charette, chief of operations for the fire department.

Chiara contends the stockpiled paper wasn't a safety hazard, and said the borough wanted it out because it was against zoning permitted for the site.

He added he was told Montreal police arrested someone on the premises that night.

"I understand they did arrest somebody on the premises that night, and we're waiting for a copy of that police report," Chiara said.

Montreal police Constable Raphaël Bergeron said he had no report of an arrest related to the fire.

Meanwhile, Chiara said he had no insurance to cover his losses. He's also out the \$1 million to \$1.5 million a year he was earning in rent for part of the site, he said.

"Let's be clear," Chiara said. "We have nothing to gain from this and a lot to lose from it."

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18 Novembre - Developer held benefit for mayor – The Gazette – Linda Gyulai

Developer held benefit for mayor
Fundraiser another link between Tremblay's party and housing agency

A fundraiser for Mayor Gérald Tremblay's 2005 election campaign is a recurring name in land deals with the Société d'habitation et développement de Montréal and the city.

Vincent Chiara, a real estate investor, hosted a \$1,000-a-head fundraiser at his Laval home on Aug. 31, 2005, for the Montreal Island Citizens Union party, the party's financial records show.

Fifty-four people bought tickets, the report says.

Since the election, Chiara has purchased a building from the SHDM with partners, acted as a consultant to a buyer in another transaction with the SHDM and says he was approached, but refused, to buy into a third transaction involving the SHDM.

Chiara also owns property that has him dealing with city hall. That includes the 3.7-million-square-foot former Canadian National rail yard in Point St. Charles, where he's working with the Southwest borough to develop a project.

The site has been in the news since Saturday because of a massive fire in a 450,000-square-foot industrial building that's on it.

Chiara was renting the space to a recycling firm. The cause of the fire is still unknown.

The fundraiser is a further link between Tremblay's party and the SHDM.

A story in Saturday's Gazette showed that some of the city and SHDM representatives who worked to turn the former municipal body into a private, non-profit corporation in 2006 worked on Tremblay's 2001 election campaign or previously worked as political aides to Tremblay.

The Quebec Municipal Affairs Department is examining whether the transformation violated the city charter. Audits are under way into recent SHDM real estate projects.

Chiara said he was asked by "a couple of people from the party" to hold the fundraiser.

"I gave out tickets, and friends of mine sold (tickets)," he said, adding the attendees included real estate competitors, builders, businesspeople in the food industry and other industries.

"I supported the party and I supported the platform, so I was glad to support a fundraiser when I was asked to help the party out in raising funds," he said.

Chiara said he has also given contributions to Tremblay's team and to the opposition Vision Montreal party.

"I've given money to both parties in every election only because if you have a fair and democratic society, you need an opposition," he said.

Vision Montreal's financial statements list a \$1,000 donation from him in 2006.

"I work with them because I'm a developer and I present projects to them," Chiara, who noted he's a prolific developer, said of his fundraiser and contributions.

"So the civil servants are not the only people who you need the support of when you're trying to get a project through.

"It's just how business is run. Where are they going to raise money if people in the business community don't help them? It's not because you're going to get favours from it."

The mayor attended Chiara's 2005 fundraiser, Tremblay aide Renée Sauriol said, adding it's already a matter of public record.

However, she denied that contributions influence the city council or the executive committee.

"There are laws on party financing that allow a person to contribute to any party and there are laws on how contracts are awarded," Sauriol said.

"But there is no link between the contribution that a person makes to any political party at the provincial level, at the federal level, at the municipal level, and a decision that's made by the executive committee or the city council."

Chiara, through his real estate portfolio, Chivas Trust, bought a complex at 1401-1615 St. Patrick St. in Southwest borough with partners, including members of the Saputo family, from the SHDM in June for

\$7.1 million plus taxes.

The executive committee did not pass a resolution beforehand authorizing the SHDM to sell the building, as required in an agreement binding the corporation and the city.

However, SHDM spokesperson Stéphanie Gareau said the SHDM already had necessary approval because the SHDM's 40-page 2008-2010 strategic plan, which the city council approved in June 2007, included a list of buildings it was considering selling in an annex on Page 34. The building is on the list.

And the SHDM did not launch a public call for bids, Gareau said, because the SHDM had received an unsolicited offer for the building's fair market value. The building's tenant had a right of first refusal but passed on a chance to buy, she added.

However, Chiara contends the SHDM "had the property on the market," after which his group made an offer.

In another SHDM transaction, Chiara said he acted as consultant to Lieberman Realities, which bought two apartment buildings from SHDM on Sussex St. and Lincoln Ave. in May for \$1 million less than the \$11.2-million top offer it received.

As The Gazette reported last week, the winning company, which the SHDM said had the best financing proposal and best qualifications to manage the affordable-rent buildings, was the fourth-highest of five bids it received.

Chiara says he understood from the SHDM at the time that his client's bid was the highest.

Meanwhile, Chiara said he was invited by a group to bid on the commercial part of a 4-million-square-foot site in east-end Montreal known as Contrecoeur, but turned it down.

The SHDM's 2007 sale of the site to Construction Frank Catania is now the subject of internal audits by the city and the SHDM. The SHDM's general manager has been suspended with pay pending the results of one of the examinations.

Chiara said he isn't involved "in any way, shape or form" with Catania or the site, but he said urban planners who were looking into the development potential of the site before the sale invited him to meet with them to discuss a stake.

"There was a commercial component," Chiara said. "And they asked me to look at it and I told them I had no interest."

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20 novembre - Taxpayers' money went up in smoke – The Gazette – David Hanna

The fire at the former CN shop buildings in Point St. Charles last weekend appears to have destroyed the enormous 1928 locomotive repair facility with a loss to the Montreal economy that reaches well beyond the destruction of an important heritage building. In fact, this was no simple paper warehouse as reported by much of the media, but a crucial building whose loss will have an economic impact of epic proportions.

The city of Montreal as well as Quebec's ministry of transport are both at fault.

The Point St. Charles shop complex was the last available facility for repairing and maintaining trains. Incredibly, CN sold it for \$1 a few years ago when no one in the Quebec government had the vision to see the crying need for a major repair facility as commuter trains were returning to the rails in increasing numbers.

The current owner-developer had since treated the property as a junk facility, ever hopeful that he might eventually be permitted to tear buildings down. The city of Montreal aided and abetted this "small think" by granting a permit to allow 50 garbage trucks to rumble through the nearby residential neighbourhood daily, allowing delivery of huge quantities of paper into insecure storage in the main shop building that housed a gantry crane worth millions of dollars.

In September, faced with a surging demand for commuter trains and a need to consolidate maintenance for all five commuter lines, the Quebec government belatedly slapped a reserve on the property, with an eye to acquiring the shop complex for all AMT trains.

Note that this is the same facility that taxpayers could have bought for the bargain price of \$1 a few years ago.

Now the Point St. Charles site will cost taxpayers many dollars more. How much? Depending on the extent of the damage, a new shop complex could cost taxpayers as much as \$500 million. Taxpayers' money literally went up in flames last weekend!

David B. Hanna

Past President of Heritage Montréal

21 novembre – Incendie aux ateliers ferroviaires de Pointe-Saint-Charles – L'arrondissement du Sud-Ouest prend les mesures nécessaires – Communiqué de presse de l'arrondissement Sud-Ouest

MONTREAL, le 21 nov. /CNW Telbec/ - A la suite de l'incendie de l'un des bâtiments des anciens ateliers ferroviaires de Pointe-Saint-Charles, survenu le 15 novembre dernier, l'arrondissement du Sud-Ouest met en place les mesures qui s'imposent afin d'assurer la sécurité et la quiétude de la population avoisinante et de préserver ce qui reste de l'édifice patrimonial incendié.

Devant l'importance des enjeux, l'arrondissement a réuni cette semaine des représentants de différents services municipaux et gouvernementaux en vue d'obtenir leur avis et de coordonner la gestion des opérations (Service de police, Service des incendies, Service des infrastructures, du transport et de l'environnement, Direction du contentieux, Cour municipale, Direction de la santé publique, CSSS Sud-Ouest Verdun).

L'arrondissement a signifié par écrit au propriétaire ses obligations sur le plan de la sécurité du public. Il lui a également fait connaître ses attentes quant à la protection du bâtiment, au nettoyage du site et à la gestion des débris de l'incendie.

L'arrondissement demande au propriétaire d'installer un périmètre de sécurité autour de la zone sinistrée afin d'en restreindre l'accès. Il lui demande aussi de fournir un rapport d'ingénieur décrivant l'état actuel du bâtiment et les travaux requis afin de sécuriser son intégrité structurale. Il requiert également que le bâtiment soit protégé des infiltrations d'eau ou de neige.

Etant donné le volume important de débris sur le site, l'arrondissement demande au propriétaire de soumettre un plan de circulation précis avant de procéder à leur évacuation, afin de réduire les nuisances dans le quartier.

L'arrondissement a aussi rappelé qu'aucuns travaux de réparation, de transformation ou de démolition, même partielle, ne peuvent être entrepris sans son consentement.

L'arrondissement souhaite la collaboration diligente du propriétaire. Toutefois, les services intensifieront et coordonneront leurs inspections afin d'assurer le respect de la réglementation et des exigences posées.

Enfin, l'arrondissement réitère son appui à l'Office de consultation publique de Montréal dans son importante démarche participative actuellement en cours sur le redéveloppement du site.

Renseignements: Patricia Bouchard, chargée de communication, (514) 868-3695

22 novembre - During Point fire, taxpayer dollars 'went up in flames' – The Gazette – Alan Hustak

City could have bought facility for \$1, but now must find new site to service commuter trains

The Quebec government's failure to acquire the CN repair facility in Point St. Charles for \$1 when it had the opportunity to do so four years ago was an oversight that will now cost taxpayers millions, according to former Heritage Montreal president David Hanna.

The building, which had been used as a recycling warehouse for the last two years, burned down last weekend.

The fire came six weeks after the province, faced with having to service a growing network of Metropolitan Transit Agency commuter trains, announced it was considering expropriating the property.

"The MTA now has five lines in operation, is building a sixth, is going to increase the capacity of its commuter trains, and has ordered hybrid locomotives and a new fleet of rolling stock, and has just woken up to the fact that it has nowhere to service all this equipment," said Hanna, graduate chairman of urban studies

at Université du Québec à Montréal. "The warehouse that was destroyed was no simple warehouse. All the heavy-duty equipment, the gantries you need, was all intact inside. Now faced with the need for a major building to house a repair shop for its commuter trains, the government has to act fast."

For the moment, Canadian Pacific is servicing the trains for the MTA on a contract basis.

The Point St. Charles railyards have been in operation since 1854, when the site was developed by the Grand Trunk Railway, which later became Canadian National.

The repair shop that burned down was built in 1928 and expanded during the Second World War. CN leased the property to French engineering firm Alstom in 1993. When Alstom left the building in 2003, CN offered the property to the Quebec government for \$1.

Not wanting to be saddled with the cost of decontaminating the land, the government declined the offer. The property was then sold to real estate developer Vincent Chiara, who leased it to a paper recycling company, J. C. Fibers.

"Taxpayers could have bought the entire property for \$1," Hanna said.

"Now, because of a ministry that can't plan ahead, a new shop complex could cost as much as half a billion dollars. Taxpayers' dollars literally went up in flames last weekend."

Mario St. Pierre, a spokesperson for the Quebec Transport Department, said the situation is more complex than Hanna suggests.

"The need for a repair shop is the responsibility of the (transit agency), which coordinates transportation requirements for the Montreal metropolitan area, not the ministry," St. Pierre said. "The AMT is an independent agency that is funded by the government, and makes its own decisions about things like this."

Southwest borough mayor Jacqueline Montpetit said nothing prevents the MTA from moving ahead with plans to use a portion of the site for railway repair. Another large building that once housed a railway maintenance shop sits just west of the burned

building. Also, she said, it might be possible to preserve what's left of the burned-out building. That remains to be determined by experts, however.

Linda Gyulai of The Gazette contributed to this report

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10 décembre 2008 - L'incendie aux anciens ateliers du CN suscite des interrogations – La Voix Pop – André Desroches

Quand le nettoyage du site sera-t-il effectué? Qui paiera pour ce nettoyage? Quel sort attend le bâtiment incendié? La Ville de Montréal ne pourrait-elle pas exproprier les terrains? L'incendie survenu sur le site des anciens ateliers du CN, le 15 novembre, préoccupe la population de Pointe-Saint-Charles. On a pu le constater lors de la séance du conseil d'arrondissement tenue le 2 décembre alors que plusieurs résidents du quartier sont venus s'informer de la suite des choses.

Le sujet a occupé la presque totalité de la période de questions réservée aux citoyens. Plusieurs interventions ont été faites par des membres de la table de concertation Action-Gardien et du collectif La Pointe Libertaire.

La mairesse de l'arrondissement du Sud-Ouest, Jacqueline Montpetit, a fait le point dans le dossier. Rappelant d'entrée de jeu que l'administration municipale a acheminé une série de demandes au propriétaire relatives au nettoyage du site et à la protection de l'immeuble, elle a expliqué que suite au sinistre, l'arrondissement a procédé à l'inspection de tous les bâtiments, histoire de prévenir une nouvelle catastrophe. «Nous avons inspecté les bâtiments et nous n'avons rien vu qui contrevient aux usages», a-t-elle indiqué. Précision utile puisque, on le rappelle, le bâtiment sinistré était utilisé par la compagnie Fibres JC pour l'entreposage de ballots de papier destinés au recyclage, un usage qui contrevenait à la réglementation. Mme Montpetit a également fait savoir que l'arrondissement avait adressé une lettre au Conseil du patrimoine de Montréal pour obtenir son avis en ce qui concerne la protection des bâtiments du site.

Pour ce qui est du nettoyage, le propriétaire est présentement en appel d'offres pour cette opération, a mentionné la mairesse. Le directeur de l'arrondissement, Érick Santana, a précisé que les choses devaient être faites de manière sécuritaire. Avant que l'on ne sorte les débris, l'arrondissement a consulté la Direction de santé publique de Montréal ainsi que la Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail. Il a demandé une caractérisation de ce qui a flambé, a signalé M. Santana.

Et puis, comme l'a souligné Jacqueline Montpetit, l'accès au site est restreint pour le moment. L'origine de l'incendie est inconnue et une enquête a été ouverte par le Service de police de la Ville de Montréal. Cette enquête n'est pas terminée, a indiqué le commandant du poste 15, Jean-Ernest Célestin.

Quant aux coûts liés au nettoyage, ils seront assumés entièrement par le propriétaire des lieux, a dit Érick Santana. «Il est hors de question que la Ville paie. Le site

appartient au propriétaire.»

Pour les citoyens du secteur, le bâtiment incendié constituait un «repère visuel historique», a par ailleurs fait valoir une membre d'Action-Gardien, qui a plaidé pour la reconstruction de la coquille extérieure du bâtiment dans le respect de son architecture originale. La mairesse n'a pris aucun engagement à ce sujet.

D'autre part, tant les membres d'Action-Gardien que de la Pointe Libertaire estiment que la Ville de Montréal devrait exproprier les terrains des anciens ateliers. Un tel projet ne figure pas dans les cartons de la Ville et de l'arrondissement, a répondu la mairesse.