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## **MONTRÉAL DESIGNATED AS A CITY OF DESIGN BY UNESCO: A FIRST IN NORTH AMERICA**

**Montréal, May 17, 2006** – “The Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity has designated Montréal as “UNESCO City of Design” as part of the Creative Cities Network,” announced today Gérald Tremblay, Mayor of Montréal, and Benoit Labonté, member of the executive committee responsible for culture, heritage and design.

With this honour, Montréal becomes the first North American city to join the recent UNESCO City of Design network after Buenos Aires (August 2005) and Berlin (November 2005), in addition to other cities recognized by UNESCO in other fields of excellence, including literature, music, food, cinema, folk art and digital arts.

Through this award, UNESCO recognized the effort and enthusiasm of the public and private sectors, Montréal civil society, as well as the city’s potential for economic and social development in the field of design. With the participation of the design community, Design Montréal, applied for this honour at the request of Benoît Labonté and the Montréal executive committee. The certificate will be presented by Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization as part of a visit to Montréal scheduled for the month of June.

“After becoming the headquarters of the International Design Alliance (ICSID and ICOGRADA) last year, this UNESCO award represents major international recognition for Montréal and all our creators and players involved in the fields of design, culture and economy,” said Mayor Tremblay. “This title rewards the sustained efforts by Montréal and its partners since the publication of the Picard Report in 1986 which focused on design as one of the priorities of metropolitan economic development. Montréal already exports knowledge in the field of strategic design promotion, since its original Commerce Design Montréal concept was picked up by the cities of New York, Saint-Étienne and Lyon, and it will continue to do so as part of the “UNESCO Creative Cities Network”. Design is also one of the elements of the *Imagining – Building Montréal 2025* game plan, in which Montréal committed itself to becoming one of the world’s most attractive cities, through design quality and innovation,” added Mayor Tremblay.

“Design is a strategic strength that Montréal must develop. The honour bestowed by UNESCO acknowledges both past experience and our visible commitment in the field of design. It must now serve as an incentive lever to accelerate implementation of the recent municipal action plan *Montréal, Design de ville / Ville de design*, launched in September 2005. We firmly believe that a strong combination of design, architecture and urban development contributes directly to the quality of life in Montréal, highlights the sense of pride of Montrealers, as well as the interest of visitors and investors,” said Benoît Labonté.

Montréal is a city where design and designers, be they involved in the fields of interior, industrial, graphic, fashion or architectural design, represent a dynamic force of cultural and economic life. According to recent statistics, design is responsible for 20,356 jobs in Montréal's metropolitan area and economic spin-offs of more than \$750 million. Also, 65.3% of Québec workers involved in the field of design live in the metropolitan area. Montréal is the only North American city to have established, as early as 1991, a bureau dedicated exclusively to the development and promotion of design. Important achievements are owed to this bureau, including the Commerce Design Montréal competition, which has contributed to the rise of Montréal as a city of design.

Montréal is clearly part of the network of cities of knowledge in the field of design with four universities teaching design, architecture and urban planning, as well as five university research chairs in those fields. Montréal is also home to a rich network of high-level establishments dedicated to the promotion and dissemination of design, including the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Centre de design de l'UQAM, as well as the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts with its decorative arts collection. Montréal also hosts numerous design-related events, several of which occur in May, referred to as Design Month. They include the Montréal International Interior Design Show and the Gala des prix de l'Institut de Design Montréal.

According to the interim director of the Arts and Cultural Business Division, Mr. Indrasen Vencatachellum, "The global alliance of UNESCO has created the Creative Cities Network to support cultural pluralism and to make creativity an essential engine of economic and social development. This network wishes to promote development by using the potential of local cultural industries through partnerships with the public and private sectors, sharing sound practices and knowledge internationally. By using this network as a springboard, cities pool their experiences to help each other to strengthen local skills and increase the diversity of cultural products available on the national and international markets."

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