

# **Meadowbrook an Endangered Ecosystem, Save or Destroy**

## **Location: Lachine (sector Ville St. Pierre)**

Generations come and go but the land and its natural surroundings remain unless man destroys.

Vast stretches of former natural habitats have declined all over the world. It is to the credit of some, who in their wisdom and power helped to preserve these endangered lands, that whatever is left we can behold and savour.

Studies reveal that there are many ecosystems which have declined to proportions of 98 percent of their area and there are many more that are considered as considerably endangered. Although the plight of individual species has been the focus of public interest, the health of the larger community of plants, animals and microbes of which they are a part of the ecosystem, nature's functional unit, reports show that these systems have declined on a grand but unappreciated scale.

We are not only losing single species here and there, we are losing entire assemblages of species and their habitats.

In the immediate area of the Island of Montreal, there is such an endangered place. It is the property of Canadian Pacific, that is managed (owned) by one of its subsidiaries, It is the Wentworth Golf Course lands, better known as Meadowbrook and the subject of this call for your help.

Between Mount Royal Park on one side and the Arrondissement/Borough of Dorval on the other, there is only one green area of any significance and that is Meadowbrook. Its majestic attributes are not a difficult proposition to describe.

A first visit indicates the presence of trees that are of great value. Many of these trees have a history of over seventy - five years or date from the beginning of the 20th century. One cannot give a precise account of all of this, however, there are trees of basswood, white oak, a few cherry trees, butternut hickory, white willow and silver maple.

The dimension of these trees are of a large size, of course there are other trees and plants of a more recent vintage but in all they constitute a priceless heritage of the past.

There are great concerns concerning the survival of many of these trees. A large space would be required and it would be difficult to maintain this growth should there be any development involving the Meadowbrook property. was made by no less an authority than the "Institute de Recherche en Biologie végétale" which is a part of the City of Montreal's "Jardin botanique".

In view of this fact there is no substitute for the real value of these trees that grew to their size, after many decades, which will now be destroyed.

The principal ecological interests of this territory is in its role as a buffer zone, It separates vastly different areas; on one side are the industrial zones of the former city of Ville St. Pierre and its neighbour Lachine, on the other side are the residential quarters of Côte St. Luc and Montreal West.

There are other concerns that the quality of life for the residents of the communities mentioned, will be threatened, faced with the danger of the disappearance of the animal and vegetable life of this territory, resulting from any proposed development.

To add to the seriousness of the problem, city streets like Westminster and Côte St. Luc Road would suffer in the face of gridlock which will not be of a temporary nature but will continue over a period of many years, not just months, while construction is going on and thereafter.

Presently to find green spaces on the Island of Montreal is very rare and each time a tree disappears, a piece of nature and all its diversity is gone.

The territory of Meadowbrook constitutes a treasured place, nearby in the Arrondissement/Borough of Lachine is an area, of contaminated soil, abandoned buildings, factories that spew their wastes and contaminants round the clock, to the detriment of the entire neighbouring areas. The buffer to all of this, is Meadowbrook, it must survive, there is no other way. A project to developing this jeweled retreat is a menace to the survival of the population of plants, trees, birds and animals that are assembled in the environment of this region. Considering the extraordinary potential of this territory there is only one choice that we have, which is to preserve it.

### How!

There have been many different proposals on what to do with Meadowbrook. From expropriation by municipalities, to assistance from higher levels of government, restrictive zoning, with the worst scenario, to develop and complete the asphalt and concrete monument of folly. Now being studied and seriously looked at by the Arrondissement /Borough of Lachine

None of these appear to be satisfactory to Canadian Pacific or the general public whatever the choice.

There has been a turn in the construction and development sector. This should not in any way become a reason to destroy Meadowbrook. Except for higher costs the reasons for acquiring Meadowbrook and preserving it as a green space have not changed one iota.

Another option to acquire Meadowbrook would be an exchange of properties, which should be a part of any negotiations with Canadian Pacific.

To my knowledge and I could be corrected, I have been informed that Canadian Pacific, though not in similar circumstances, has saved a golf course in Vancouver, B.C. which was its property. A precedent has been set, let us continue. Then there is a matter of tax breaks. In the past large corporations including Canadian Pacific have asked for and in many cases have received tax breaks from the Federal government, even though their financial status was on the rise. The loss of Meadowbrook by Canadian Pacific could be easily justified as a tax break. This in turn, would give Canadian Pacific the opportunity to play its part to preserve the territory of Meadowbrook as a green space.

For the last number of months there is a lawsuit in progress, by which the City of Montreal and the former City of Côte St. Luc are being sued for \$20,000,000 by Canadian Pacific as a result of the passing of the by-law which rezoned the Meadowbrook Golf course to. The amended zoning recreational/commerce by-law was a milestone in the ongoing struggle.

Should the City of Montreal and the Arrondissement/Borough of Côte St. Luc. Mtl. West, Hampstead be successful in the defense of the by-law. Then by using this result as a guideline, a solution could be found to effectively help to preserve the Arrondissement /Borough of Lachine portion of Meadowbrook in the same manner as Côte Saint Luc. In other words pass a by-law similar to the one passed by Côte Saint Luc.

It is amazing that a corporation such as Canadian Pacific ,that prides itself on being a good corporate citizen does not act in this manner.For years they have been preaching to their neighbours,in reply to many complaints regarding train noise, air pollution and other detriments with matter of fact answers.We were here first ,if you build your homes near the railroad suffer the consequences ,too bad.

Now, this self righteous corporation wants to develop a property, which will face the same conditions,as its neighbours , without even a single thought given to its wrongful action.What irony ,what a disgrace.

I have mentioned a number of possibilities on how to preserve Meadowbrook as a green space,unfortunately there has not been any mention of Meadowbrook of any kind either in the City of Montreal capital expenditures budget or the Sommet de Montreal conferences Workshop 2.3 which designated a number of locations for preservation.Truly this is a dilemma which should be rectified. Once the case of the Canadian Pacific lawsuit is finalized, then the by-law to amend the zoning by Lachine,of it's Meadowbrook portion as per the Côte Saint Luc by-law ,should be immediately implemented.That is until such time as funds can be made available to effect the other possibilities proposed.

Much of the natural and unspoiled beauty that Mount Royal Park retains to this day,is due to the efforts and vision of it's designer,Frederick Law Olmstead.Also due to his philosophy of what such a park should be like.

With his departure from Montreal his parting warning was:

**Bring the park to the city but do not bring the city**

**to the park.** And so it is with Meadowbrook.

Time: 7.00Pm Thursday May 29,2003

Place:Bureau D'arrondissement 1800 Bd.ST.Joseph,Lachine

Jack Cabot