

BRIEF PRESENTED TO THE *OFFICE DE CONSULTATION PUBLIQUE DE MONTREAL*  
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION  
ON LACHINE EAST

BY  
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I live in LaSalle, near the river and the Candiac train line's LaSalle station, about a kilometer and a half by road from the site of the future Lachine East development. I am testifying here because I expect to be greatly affected by this development from the point of view of my ability to get around to points near and far, and my ability to make use of and enjoy my neighbourhood, and I expect my friends and neighbours to be similarly affected.

Also relevant to my testimony is the fact that I have been involved since the summer of 2011 with the citizens' response to several large and dense developments proposed by the LaSalle borough for the area around the LaSalle train station, named "Le Quartier de la gare LaSalle" (QDLGL). Citizen petitions led to the withdrawal of the initial zoning change for the whole sector sought by the borough in November 2011; a first Wanklyn project was withdrawn by the borough in July 2012 after many more citizens signed a register than were needed to trigger a referendum; and a second Wanklyn project was withdrawn by the borough in July 2016 following a recommendation to that effect by the *Office de consultation publique de Montréal*. The OCPM's report on *Le Projet de l'îlot Wanklyn* [http://ocpm.qc.ca/sites/ocpm.qc.ca/files/pdf/P78/rapport-ilot-wanklyn\\_1.pdf](http://ocpm.qc.ca/sites/ocpm.qc.ca/files/pdf/P78/rapport-ilot-wanklyn_1.pdf) contains a great deal of information that is also relevant to the Lachine East sector. I also refer you to my brief submitted to the OCPM in the context of that consultation for details of the reasons for citizens' involvement and protest of these large developments in this particular location, the difficulties with public transit in the area, and other information much of which directly or indirectly applies also to the Lachine East area.

(<http://ocpm.qc.ca/sites/ocpm.qc.ca/files/pdf/P78/8a9.pdf>)

The two areas of Lachine East and Le Quartier de la gare LaSalle are both located within a few hundred meters of the congested areas at the Airlie, Clément and Dollard entrances and exits to the Mercier Bridge and highways 20 and 138 in the St.Pierre interchange, in a sector that is also filled with natural and man-made barriers to mobility such as the St. Lawrence River, the Lachine Canal, the highways just named, the entrance ramp to the Mercier Bridge, the Canadian Pacific train tracks, offshoots of the same to serve local industry etc.. It should be noted that the future developments largely share the same points of access to the road network and are served by the same commuter train line with limited departures and number of

passenger spaces. The Jenkins site, for example is located about 600 meters from the St.Pierre street entrance to Highway 20 West, closed for the last four years but slated to be reopened this year. This is one of the same entrances that I use every day as a commuter coming from the Quartier de la gare LaSalle area and is likely to be used by all the commuters from the Lachine East site dissatisfied with the service on the train line, as well as routinely by people from the western part of LaSalle (There are only two ways to access Highway 20 from LaSalle which is cut off from the highway by the Lachine Canal: either by the Airlie/Clement /St.Pierre Boulevard entrances at the St.Pierre Interchange or at the Angrignon interchange several kilometers to the east). This area is already quite congested, and will be much more so with many thousands of additional commuters.

It is my opinion that because of the proximity of the two future developments, their shared geography and common points of access to the transport infrastructure their impact on residents needs to be considered together and that is what I shall do in the next section.

Looking now at the number of residential units being considered for the two developments, I am a little puzzled by the elastic nature of the estimate of the housing units to be built in Lachine East. The initial reports in the media were for 5,000 units and it was billed as the largest project on the island of Montreal (now, of course, eclipsed by Royalmount). Reports in the last year have been for 4,000 units but the Lachine borough's website speaks of 4,800 units, so I shall stick with 5,000 units in my calculations, as my experience in LaSalle says these numbers usually go up and only rarely down (See the next paragraph for this week's example. Also, the Jenkins project, currently under construction in Lachine East was supposed to have 520 units, but, if I understood correctly what was said at the OCPM information session on February 24th, has had infrastructure built for 600, implying that the total number may go up in the future).

The LaSalle borough's plans for the QDLGL had gradually increased to 2124 units by 2015 (see p. 113 of <http://ocpm.qc.ca/sites/ocpm.qc.ca/files/pdf/P78/4e1.pdf> ) Just this past Monday, at the April borough council meeting, the mayor told me that she plans to add several hundred more – I estimate about 300 from what she said about redeveloping the old Seagram's or Diageo buildings at Lafleur and Newman streets). ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwYu3m1Dpyg&list=PLu0e8xPRjtw1V6mMljqQRtq6ltw4G\\_Aa&index=3&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwYu3m1Dpyg&list=PLu0e8xPRjtw1V6mMljqQRtq6ltw4G_Aa&index=3&t=0s))

Adding the Lachine East and the Quartier de la Gare LaSalle units gives a total of about 7,400 units in this area, and I am not even including the 450 units likely to be built at the mother house of the Soeurs de Ste. Anne convent nearby or the *Transit Oriented Development* (TOD) planned for the Montreal West train station.

Given that the occupancy rate in both Lachine and LaSalle is 2.2 persons per housing unit and the parking space prescribed by the boroughs is 1.25 per housing unit, we can expect an influx of about 16,280 people and 9,250 cars (probably more since many families are obliged to have more than one car on account of the poor transit options in the area) into this crucial and already congested area!

According to the *Communauté Métropolitaine de Montréal's Plan Métropolitain d'aménagement et de développement (PMAD)*, the greater Montreal's land use and development plan, these two developments are supposed to be Transit Oriented Developments (TODs) and are slated to have an obligatory minimum average density of 80 units per hectare.

The PMAD defines a TOD as a “medium to high density development situated at a walking distance from a major point of access to the public transit system, offering housing, job opportunities and commercial activity, designed for the pedestrian but not excluding the automobile” (my translation). The idea is that people will have opportunities to reside, work and shop in their neighbourhoods, reducing the need to travel, and that when they do need to travel they will use public transit, rather than their cars, thus reducing road congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. This then theoretically justifies higher densities than normal.

Please note that the PMAD talks about the TOD being built around an **existing** major point of access to the public transit system and not an “aspirational” point of access, an idea floated during the February 24<sup>th</sup> information session. In the report on the second Wanklyn project the OCPM's commissioners were also firm that the Transit Oriented Development must have existing transit before the densification is carried out, since future construction of infrastructure is often extremely uncertain and may be delayed for decades and in any case the transit is the whole justification for the higher than normal density (My parents bought a duplex in LaSalle forty years ago, having been told that a metro station would be built at the corner of Lafleur and Newman. There is still no metro in LaSalle.)

In the case of these two developments, the LaSalle and du Canal train stations on the Cadiac train line are the justification for the TOD designation, as can be seen in Annex B of the CMM's Bylaw No. 2018.73 Modifying the Bylaw No. 2011.51, the latest amendment to the PMAD [http://cmm.qc.ca/fileadmin/user\\_upload/documents/20180522\\_R%C3%A8glement\\_modifiant\\_R\\_PMAD.pdf](http://cmm.qc.ca/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/20180522_R%C3%A8glement_modifiant_R_PMAD.pdf). The area around the next station on the line, Montreal West, is also designated as a TOD.

However, the train service is very limited on the Cadiac train line: seven departures towards downtown from the du Canal station between 6:18 and 9:14 a.m. one about every half hour, and seven returns from downtown leaving Lucien L'Allier station between 3:35 and 6:20 p.m., also about one every half hour, and only two other departures daily towards downtown, at 10:54 a.m. and 1:44 p.m. (departure times all from the du Canal station) and two returns from downtown at 9:35 a.m. and 12:20 p.m. – much more limited than on the other commuter train lines in the Montreal area. There is no service on the evenings, on weekends, or on holidays. This train basically serves people going to work downtown from 9 to 5 weekdays. It offers nothing for people working other schedules, other places such as the West Island, the airport, boroughs and towns north of the Cadiac line, going to medical appointments outside of rush hour or wanting to go downtown for entertainment.

The rush hour trains already arrive fairly full from the south shore –it's commonly standing room only at the LaSalle station -- so how could one cram in thousands more people? The du Canal station is rudimentary, one must climb and descend 100 steps to access the train platform, it is not universally accessible, and is unsuitable for children. Even if the train platform

were accessible, the trains are not, since the first step to the train is a foot and a half or so above the platform. And, most of all, it is **temporary**, scheduled to exist for only another eight years since it was built for the purpose of alleviating traffic during the reconstruction of the Turcot Interchange.

This weekend (April 5-7, 2019), like the November 9-12, 2018 weekend, is one of the worst weekends for this reconstruction, as both Highways 20 and 15 will be closed for several days, so that elements of the existing interchange can be demolished. An increase of six departures on the Vaudreuil- Hudson train line has been announced but, just as in November 2018, there is zero addition to the service on the Cadiac train line. There has never been any increase in the service on that line since a slight improvement in 2011, at the start of the continuing construction on the Mercier Bridge. During the discussions about the first Wanklyn project we were told that the Canadian Pacific does not wish to add commuter trains on the Cadiac train line because commercial traffic is much more profitable for them.

The OCPM commissioners concluded in their report on the second Wanklyn Project that the Quartier de la gare LaSalle was not a TOD and that there was neither enough public transit nor local mix of uses offered to justify the 786 units of the Wanklyn project. In a scathing report, the OCPM recommended that the borough not adopt the bylaw changes making the project possible and the borough subsequently withdrew the project.

Incredibly, with a total of 7,400 units in the area we are now talking about allowing the construction of almost ten times as many units as were rejected for the second Wanklyn Project without any change to the transit facilities except the addition of a **temporary** station.

In any case, for adequate transport it is not enough to have a train station, even a permanent one – one must also have trains!

I notice that the CIMA+ study on traffic mobility in the area and impact of the projected development on congestion is strictly limited to the Lachine East area. But this is actually even a regional issue: these developments will affect not only people within and close by the development, but those in Lachine and LaSalle more broadly, as well as people coming to or transiting through the area by Highways 20 and 138 and the Mercier Bridge from the West Island, the south shore, downtown, the airport and so on. It seems to me that there should be a study of the impact on the whole region.

The CIMA+ study shows that the Lachine East area is already congested, that there are several bus lines, but the buses are often stuck in traffic, making them an inefficient way to get around, and the study offers few solutions aside from tinkering a little with traffic lights and intersections. It basically admits that not much can be done to significantly improve traffic flow.

For me, personally, with regards to my ability to get around by public transit, I will refer you to my brief in the context of the *Projet de l'Îlot Wanklyn* to see how difficult it is. I shall also mention that sometimes last summer my husband and I were unable to get out of our house by car because of traffic, to the point that I have become concerned about ambulances and firetrucks being able to reach the area in an emergency. Also, to go to points west we must either go by Highway 20 west or du Musée avenue and the waterfront on Saint-Joseph

Boulevard, and sometimes those were already blocked so that my husband missed two sporting events, giving up and returning home after advancing one block in twenty minutes, the time it usually takes us to get to Baie d'Urfé where these events take place). It is unimaginable to think of 9,000 plus cars pouring into this area.

It is urgent that we recognize that this project is completely unrealistic at these densities. It is almost as if those who wrote the PMAD assumed that every commuter rail station was automatically a major point of access to the public transit network, without looking at the actual situation on the ground in terms of public transit available or barriers to mobility. In my opinion, the TOD designations for these two developments are a mistake that needs to be urgently corrected.

As alarming as this unrealistic density is for road congestion, parking problems and the security of residents, one can also legitimately wonder about the effects of such urbanization and densification on the very nature of the neighbourhood. The ten-story towers just authorized last week for the Jenkins project are in complete contrast to one, two and three-story heights that exist in the west of LaSalle and east of Lachine and will, in fact, be the tallest buildings in Lachine, according to Lachine Mayor Vodanovic's comment at the adoption of the minor derogation which allowed the project to go ahead on March 19<sup>th</sup>.

I wonder how many people can conceptualize just how many units the number of 5,000 represents. I notice that the 174 condos just authorized for the Jenkins site will be housed in three ten-story towers. In other words, each ten-story tower will contain about 58 condos. This means that 5,000 units would constitute 86 ten-story towers, a veritable forest of sky-scrapers, where now there are one-, two-, and three-story buildings.

My husband and I and other people who live in LaSalle (at least according to a number of the briefs and presentations regarding the second Wanklyn project presented to the OCPM) and likely many in Lachine did not move there to live cheek-by-jowl with downtown-style skyscrapers, to be in their shadow, be subject to the winds that tend to swirl around them (and will all the more so with our warming climate), to deal with the depersonalization commonly resulting from such constructions or to have them be our skyline while their denizens enjoy panoramic views of the river, the canal and downtown resulting from towers being allowed in the midst of a low-height neighbourhood (as touted in a Quartier de la gare LaSalle maps) and the promoter enjoys the profits that come from building towers where one can guarantee not only that there will be views but that there will not be future development obstructing them because of the low height of what has already been built. What will be the effects on *Vieux Lachine*, our parks, marina, fishing areas, cycling paths, flora and fauna when they are invaded by thousands of people who risk destroying the very reasons for which they bought property in the area. In publicity handed out in a 2016 open house the promoter of the VillaNova development sings the praises of *Vieux Lachine*, and the other features I have just mentioned and includes pictures of the same, and yet this is precisely what is in danger of disappearing with the influx of the thousands of new residents.

I note from the statistical information about the Lachine borough offered on the borough's website that the median household income after taxes in Lachine is \$46, 045, whereas a three bedroom condo in the the new Jenkins area towers (Flora condos) is being

offered this week starting at \$437, 900 (up \$30,000 from the week before, prior to the authorization of the towers), and according to the promoter's website, after taxes and rebates this will be \$502, 000 and up. This is in no uncertain terms a complete break with the traditionally working class Lachine!

Here's some of what I would like to see in Lachine East:

--A development that is in harmony in size, heights, style and density with what exists there now and that will respect the current patrimony

-- Lots of greenery: the VillaNova promoter's video shows mostly an asphalted development, with rectangular square manicured and sterile patches of grass. I would like some of the greenery to be wild and not manicured.

-- Truly affordable housing, not just some social and so-called affordable housing

-- facilities such as a much needed sports complex for Lachine

-- all other facilities to cater to the needs of the future residents : parking obligatory in the purchase price, schools, dog runs (lack of these is a real problem in Toronto apparently ,etc.

Thank you for your kind attention to my brief.