

April 26, 2017.

Realistic Conservation

I will not pretend to be an expert on city development or a die hard, experienced environmentalist, because I am neither. I am just a secondary five student at Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School. However, I am a concerned citizen, and while I see that the current plans for the management of the L'Anse-à-l'Orme area are well thought-out, I cannot fully approve of them. My suggestion would be for the city to acquire more of the current privately owned land that will otherwise be developed, and extend the conservation area east right up to the proposed extension of Antoine-Faucon. The increased conservation area will ensure that the wildlife in the swamps, woods and fields will continue to thrive and become even more dense and biodiverse. The reduced development zone would still allow for the new boulevard to be built to alleviate the traffic issues, and for some new housing to make more use of it. Finally, I believe that this plan of action is the very least that the city can do to protect nature on the island, for the health of our citizens and the planet as a whole.

Current and Future Biodiversity

I'm a reasonable person. Ideally, I would want to see the entire l'Anse-à-l'Orme area protected, but I can see how that wouldn't be feasible because of transportation issues in west Pierrefonds and the increasing pressure being put on the north-south boulevards. I also understand the economic issues with trying to get the land back from the private owners and the unequal distribution of green spaces on the island. At the same time though, I don't see this as an excuse to limit the conservation area to just half of the involved territory. In the second information session that I attended on April 4th, the history of the area was explained, from agricultural lands to the spreading Wood No. 3, to the large, biodiverse wooded area that we have today that was described as having really flourished and grown in recent decades. Then, the proposed conservation and development areas were laid out, with city representatives justifying the borders by saying that the most crucial lands were being protected and the construction would only occur on fields with low ecological value, where few mature trees would have to be cut. However, what they have completely failed to consider is that by their logic, if the flora continues to spread at the rate that it has been in recent decades, all of that land has an enormous

potential to gain a high ecological value. As a teenager looking to the future, I cannot approve of this dismissal of the future richness that this land will have, and of the way that it is considered less important than the current woods and marsh area. In addition, while the proposed plan includes the protection of the Marais Lauzon, it is isolated from the rest of the conservation area, so protection of all the land west of the Antoine-Faucon extension would create a much more integrated area for the animals. In summary, extending the protected area will provide a better environment for current wildlife and protect both current and the often overlooked future biodiversity in the region.

Transportation Advantages

As well as protecting current and future natural environments, my proposal of increasing the protected zone also does not interfere with the majority of the major road construction projects. The new urban boulevard will still be able to be built, Antoine-Faucon would be able to be extended west and north to Gouin as it is shown in the pamphlet distributed to homes by the OCPM, and Pierrefonds Boulevard would be extended up to Antoine-Faucon. This would remove a large amount of stress from St-Charles Boulevard and would provide the current inhabitants of west Pierrefonds with easy transportation to the highway as was proposed. Moreover, the entire area east of the Antoine-Faucon extension would be able to be developed, with a slightly denser housing plan still being able to contain several thousand residences and provide a comfortable, tight-knit community if it is constructed as a bit of a more urban environment than the typical west island, with a medium density of about 40 residences per hectare. The slight reduction in the population capacity of this residential area than what is currently being proposed is actually also an advantage because it will help prevent the new boulevard from developing traffic problems which could justify even more destructive road construction in the future. Overall, the compromise that I am proposing between necessary road construction, new development and maximum conservation would satisfy all parties involved.

Global Responsibility

I would like to make it very clear that the previous paragraph is not at all to be interpreted as leniency and a higher likelihood of accepting the boundaries of the current proposed development area. I am simply of the belief that my idea is the most realistic and most likely to

be seriously considered as a way to protect as much natural land on the island as possible, without making life excessively difficult for the population. I am a firm believer in the importance of protecting the Earth. As the most influential beings on this planet, with the power to create and destroy, it is our responsibility to take care of all life, such as the deer, birds, coyotes, reptiles, and dozens of other species that call l'Anse-à-l'Orme their home. Even if you don't care about that, as humans destroy nature, we destroy ourselves. Global warming is a bigger issue than ever, and as we choose polluting cars and houses over oxygen-giving trees, we contribute directly to the problem. This is everyone's problem, and the extent of development and consumption that we as a society have become accustomed to and have accepted as the definition of progress is not acceptable. We must realize that nature is priceless, and that whatever potential economic gain new development would bring, in our modern world, it does not even compare to the value of a natural environment allowed to thrive as it did for millions of years before colonization. In the grand scheme of things, is the new development really necessary, or is it just to satisfy private investors that already own the land and save the city the trouble of having to acquire them? I am seventeen years old. I do not want to grow old in a world where I need a mask to breathe, but unfortunately, that will probably be the case if we do not take every opportunity we have to protect the Earth's gifts, starting right now with l'Anse-à-l'Orme.

Fault in the Proceedings

Before I conclude, I would like to briefly comment on the proceedings of this project and the public consultations. I applaud the city for creating a neutral party to organize this and allowing for me to be writing this letter, but despite being asked for my opinion, the only thing that I feel the OCPM is trying to consult me about is how to go about organizing the development area, not whether or not the development area should exist, or where the limits should be. It seems to me that a large portion of the people attending the information sessions have not been in agreement with the proposed plans, but as others have pointed out, they are being presented in a way that suggests that half of the concerned territory will be developed no matter what the citizens say. I truly hope that this is not the case, and that my opinion and those of others who have a similar ideology will be heard and reflected in the final recommendation to the city.

Final Remarks

To conclude, while based on my beliefs, I would prefer 100% conservation of the l'Anse-à-l'Orme territory; I understand that this is not a very realistic approach in practice. This is why I propose to extend the conservation area east right up to what will become the extended north-south section of Antoine-Faucon street. This will allow for an increased protection of current wildlife as well as future biodiversity that, following recent trends, will rapidly grow and thrive in even the current low-value areas, and must not be dismissed. Also, since this proposal still involves the construction of the new urban boulevard as well as the extension of two key roads, it will alleviate the transportation issue in Pierrefonds and not completely eliminate the creation of new residences. The main point that I want to get across though, is that as a society, we must begin to attribute more of a value to nature, and protect the environment for the sake of our animal neighbours and future generations. I support Sauvons L'Anse-à-l'Orme in their efforts to obtain 100% conservation, but in the event of that not being approved by the city, I hope that my more realistic and sustainable suggestion will be considered despite being from a single, regular teenager. After all, the youth are the future.

-Sarah Ménard