

In 2015, the City of Toronto, along with Parks Canada, took an important step towards preserving its biodiversity and its green spaces: The Rouge National Urban Park was established. Also in 2015, the City of Toronto planted 3373 trees. Sadly though, it seems that, while Toronto has been planting trees, Montreal has been cutting them down. This city still has a good deal of catching up to do in terms of green space: Montreal only has 1.2 hectares of natural spaces per 1000 inhabitants, compared to 3.24 hectares in Toronto and 8 in Ottawa. For this reason, it seems completely irrational to destroy even more of our precious green space. However, this is exactly what the Cap Nature project, in Pierrefonds-Ouest, is meant to do. How is Montreal going to reach its 10% protection goal if this outdated mind-set of “take what you need” continues to be applied? Problems can not be solved with the same thinking that created them. So that the commission may have a better idea of our motivations in opposing this project, arguments will be separated in two categories: one, why the area that is to be developed upon must be preserved and two, why the project, in its current form, is undesirable.

Firstly, L’Anse-à-l’Orme hosts incredible biological diversity, including a handful of vulnerable or endangered species. This is almost the only place in Montreal where white-tailed deer can be seen. Additionally, many of the fauna and flora found here, be they mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, plants, etc. rely on the diversity of ecosystems found at L’Anse-à-l’Orme. For example, some birds of prey use the forests to nest and the fields or fallows to hunt. Therefore, although the Cap Nature project claims to be “sustainable”, setting aside 181 hectares of land for conservation, it will be built on those fields and fallows which, though they may, at first glance, seem purposeless, are paramount to the survival of many species and are incredibly biodiverse. A broader vision of conservation must be applied to these beautiful spaces. Why not follow the example of Toronto and create a provincial park that would encompass these lands? Such a park would be the pride of our city and would attract visitors and perhaps even future residents to Montreal.

Concerning the project itself, the main problem is the location of the development. Cap Nature is to be built in an area where no roads, no powerlines, no sewer systems, and no public transit are in place. It should also be noted that this project will be located near and on floodable plains and wetlands, a challenge to construction which, along with the aforementioned issues, would make the costs of the project rise. As the “sustainable” initiative which it claims to

be, Cap Nature should also be created in such a way as to encourage use of public transit and active transportation (i.e. cycling or walking). Yet, poor access to public transportation in the area will only encourage residents to use their cars and therefore create more traffic and more pollution, of which Montreal already has more than enough. The concept of spreading out and occupying every bit of green space available, upon which this project is based, is not workable anymore in the twenty-first century. Nonetheless, alternatives are available. Montreal is dotted with abandoned industrial lands, vacant parking lots and old crumbling buildings, located closer to infrastructure, waiting to be repurposed in a truly sustainable way and to welcome future residents of our beautiful city.

As young persons, we are deeply concerned with the future of not only our city but also of our planet. Our school is located just outside the zone slated for development and the simple idea of the beautiful nature that surrounds us being replaced with concrete is horrifying to us. We further believe that preserving the entirety of L'Anse-à-l'Orme is a perfect opportunity for Montreal to become a precedent setter, an example for other cities to follow. Soon, the leaders of this city will have a choice to make. A choice between getting rid of old mind-sets and transforming Montreal into a green city or, persisting in our indifference and charging ahead, unprepared, into a dark and uncertain future. We pray they choose wisely.

Le Comité Vert du Collège Charlemagne,

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