

Brief on the Proposed Development of Pierrefonds-Ouest

Submitted by
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When considering the future of l'Anse-à-l'Orme in Pierrefonds West, we should consider its contribution in its present state to the wellbeing of the island of Montreal as a whole.

l'Anse-à-l'Orme is the last true wilderness on the island. It is home to wild animals not normally found in a major metropolis. Deer, coyotes, the bobolink bird that only nests in fallowed agricultural fields, the northern map turtle and many others live there. A study of the area¹ has identified threatened and/or at risk species that use the area planned for development. Any development of the area will reduce the habitat of these species and further threaten them. This would diminish the uniqueness that l'Anse-à-l'Orme offers to everyone.

The Montreal municipal government has committed to setting aside 10% of its area as green space. At present we are not there. Saving l'Anse-à-l'Orme would help achieve that goal. The only way to get to the 10% would be to keep all of the green spaces we have now and then find creative ways to get the rest. More city parks would have to be built and brownfields would have to be greened. Regarding l'Anse-à-l'Orme, where is the logic in building on existing wild natural spaces and at the same time “greening” brownfields to meet the 10 % target? There is nothing we could build that would replace the beauty and magnificence of l'Anse-à-l'Orme. City parks, or any green space we would have to build, are green but they are not nature. For example there are two small parks on my street that measure perhaps 50m x 25m. They too count as green space but when walking in them there is no feeling that you are in nature. l'Anse-à-l'Orme is nature, accessible to all and close to home.

The Vancouver Sun reported on April 17, 2017 in an article titled “Kids Need Access to Nature for Mental Health” that “A series of studies from the University of Illinois have found that playtime in green, outdoor spaces foster creative play and reduce symptoms of attention disorders. And the greener and wilder the environment, the stronger the effect.” Montreal has l'Anse-à-l'Orme, a truly wild space right on the island that benefits the health of the entire population. We have the opportunity and obligation to fully protect it.

The introduction in the Pierrefonds-Ouest sector Information document states that there should be a balance between conservation and real estate development. This infers that real estate development is a right. I would counter that real estate is like any other business in that it has to change as a result of laws that are enacted to protect the health of the general population. Of course companies have the right to operate and do business but not to the detriment of the population, which is why governments make the decisions and pass the laws that they do. When acid rain was a major environmental issue, and governments passed laws restricting emissions, there was a cost to industry and restrictions to the way they could do business. The auto industry had to make major changes when laws were passed to eliminate lead from gasoline, make seatbelts mandatory, limit emissions, and make cars crashworthy. There are many more examples where new environmental standards are set, or health benefits are identified, that lead to the passing of laws that affect how and where a business can operate. The City of Pierrefonds has the ability protect all of l'Anse-à-l'Orme by enforcing existing laws aimed protect

threatened species and their habitat, and by refusing to allow the proposed Pierrefonds Ouest development to proceed.

The introduction in the Pierrefonds-Ouest sector Information document states that the development project will combine real estate development with the enhancement of natural environments. How is it possible to enhance nature by building on it? How could the last truly wild environment on the island of Montreal be enhanced by the construction of 6000 new residences? I've never heard of someone hiking in a provincial or national park and saying "you know, 6000 new residences would really enhance this place". It is more likely that the real estate development is being enhanced by what would be left of l'Anse-à-l'Orme.

David Cliche, who represents those who want to develop Pierrefonds Ouest, has accused those against the development of being NIMBYs. When looking at Montreal as part of mother earth, Pierrefonds Ouest is the backyard, and it's time for all of Montreal to protect it so that we still have a backyard. It can help make Montreal an example to the world that there are people who put health and nature ahead of development and profit.

Montreal, being an island, has a finite amount of space. At some point in the near future, once all of the parks and green spaces have been created and protected, and all of the remaining space has been built on, there will be no more empty space to build on. At that point two things could happen to provide more living space. Either we build up, meaning to densify, or we build off island. What we need from our leaders is for them to decide to do that starting now. We're going to have to build up, or off island, at some point so why not start by protecting the last truly wild space on the island and decide that l'Anse-à-l'Orme will not be developed but that all of it will be protected for the benefit of all.

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