

Who am I ?

My name is Donald Hobus and I grew up in the Montreal neighbourhood of Maisonneuve, now known as Hochelaga Maisonneuve. I was born in 1948 and in my formative years the eastern tip of the island of Montreal was considered to be “the country”, Riviere des Prairies was not yet developed and there still existed farms in the northern section of Saint-Leonard de Port Maurice (as it was previously called). So much has changed and today there is almost no green space left in the eastern section of Montreal. The only sizeable green space left on the entire island of Montreal is found on the western tip of the island and it is the subject of this brief.

Growing up in the east end of Montreal I had several influences on me. First, there were my parents who were very involved in the community and, either one parent or another, a mother or father, was often absent in the evening doing some form of volunteer work. They taught me that it was important to be involved in the enrichment of their community and society in general.

The second large influence was from being involved in the Boy Scouts from the age of eight years old through to eighteen years old. This period taught me a respect for nature and it taught me to appreciate the importance of nature.

A third influence was my church and many years later I still remember singing in church the hymn that is included in this text. It should remind us all that the Mayor of Montreal, the Mayors of all of the Boroughs, the citizens of Montreal and the citizens of all of the 82 towns of the Communauté Métropolitain de Montréal have a very important role of stewardship to play in the environment. By taking care of the environment and all that is found in it, we are taking care of ourselves at the same time.

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*All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful:
The Lord God made them all.*

- 2. Each little flow'r that opens,
Each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colors,
He made their tiny wings.*
- 3. The purple-headed mountains,
The river running by,
The sunset and the morning
That brightens up the sky.*

*4. The cold wind in the winter,
The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruits in the garden,
He made them every one.*

*5. The tall trees in the greenwood,
The meadows where we play,
The rushes by the water,
To gather every day.*

*6. He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell
How great is God Almighty,
Who has made all things well.*

Why green space?

In the course of these hearings and in reading these briefs the OCPM commissioners and analysts will hear many opinions; some of them will even support the development. The concept of ownership was strange to the First Nations people who the Europeans first encountered back in the 1500s. Another strange idea to the Europeans was the principle of the "Seventh Generation" based on an Iroquois philosophy that all decisions should result in a sustainable world seven generations into the future.

The First Nations people believed that the land was owned by no one and that it was there for the benefit of all peoples. They worshipped the animals on the land and they respected the land and realized that their very existence was very much dependent on the land and the environment in which they lived. Today our politicians have forgotten this truth and they believe that man can become the master of the land and the environment. British scientist James Lovelock in his book *The Revenge of Gaia* says that we are fools to think that we can master nature and that nature will take its revenge on us.ⁱ

During these hearings you will read and hear many demands to create parks, bicycle paths and other structures for the entertainment of citizens. The island of Montreal and the entire Communauté Métropolitain de Montréal is located in the middle of the Domaine Bioclimatique Érablière de Caryer, the richest area of the province of Quebec in terms of its biodiversity. **The most important reason to protect any natural space and certainly the last remaining natural spaces on the island of Montreal is to protect the rich biodiversity that is found in and on it.**

I am requesting that the entire area known as l'Anse-a-l'Orme be protected in perpetuity, in its natural state, for the protection of the biodiversity found within. Although the OCPM mandate touches Pierrefonds alone, the l'Anse-a-l'Orme area is comprised of all of the natural space in Pierrefonds West, Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue and Senneville. It represents the last remaining natural space and the only large space left on the island of Montreal.

Pierrefonds West; rich in biodiversity

Several studies have been performed on the l'Anse-a-l'Orme area and two of them in particular point to the fact that the entire area should and must be protected. Richard Gregson produced a document "Avian Species reported in the Kestrel Fields" ⁱⁱ, the Kestrel Fields being the area that is slated for development, and this study shows that approximately 160 different species of birds nest in this area. Not only do they nest in the area but they lay their eggs and raise their young there. This area is extremely important to the Spring and Fall migration of birds and is very important to the continued existence of birds in North America. Among the 160 species there are 11 that are listed by the Canadian government as being at risk. A front page article of Le Devoir, September 10, 2014 stated that 50 percent of the birds of North America are endangered. ⁱⁱⁱ When birds are endangered then we are not far behind.

A second study, "***The impacts of the Cap Nature real estate project (Pierrefonds West) on ecological connectivity***" performed by a group of Montreal area academics clearly showed the natural value of the lands slated for development and why this area must be protected. ^{iv}

Either one of studies should be sufficient to stop any and all development in Pierrefonds West.

A cost – benefit analysis

On several occasions Borough Mayor Jim Beis has been asked during council meetings if an analysis of the project has been performed to determine the cost - benefit to the city or the borough. The answer has been consistent; that no such study existed but that a future study would be performed. We are still awaiting such a study. We are still waiting to see if there is a benefit to this development other than to the land owners.

Loss of Biodiversity; a planetary problem

Finally, we know that we are losing biodiversity on the Earth at an unprecedented rate. Many scientists have stated that we are in the middle of the sixth and final extinction. Professor E.O. Wilson, Professor Emeritus at Harvard University and the subject of several television documentaries and profiles, has stated that we are currently losing as much as 10 percent of the earth's biodiversity every ten years. ^v

The statement by E O Wilson about the loss of 10 percent of the biodiversity is reinforced by Hubert Reeves in his book, "Mal de Terre". ^{vi} Oliver Hillel, Programme Officer of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biodiversity, in a talk that he gave to students of John Abbott College reaffirmed that the planet was losing as much as 10 percent of its biodiversity every ten years. Mister Hillel further stated that we may lose as much as 72 percent of the world's biodiversity by the year 2100, which is slightly more than 80 years from now.

Will you be alive then; will your children be alive; will your grandchildren be alive? The answer to one of these questions is probably yes and therefore you should be concerned.

The Convention on Biodiversity

"The Earth's biological resources are vital to humanity's economic and social development. As a result, there is a growing recognition that biological diversity is a global asset of tremendous value to present and future generations. At the same time, the threat to species and ecosystems has never been so great as it is today. Species extinction caused by human activities continues at an alarming rate." ^{vii}

The history of the Convention on Biological Diversity has traveled a long road and has many highlights but the important points are the targets for the protection of biological diversity. The original target was set at 12 percent. Under the Aichi targets this was raised to 17 percent.

Edward O Wilson in his book "Half Earth, Our Planet's Fight for Life" has raised the bar and writes that we must protect 50 percent of the earth's surface if we wish to survive. ^{viii} If nothing else this should sound an alarm and send a strong message to all of our politicians that it is time to wake up.

Montreal: a moral obligation



The city of Montreal successfully chased after the United Nations to establish the offices of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD), based in Montreal, Canada, was established to support the goals of the Convention.^{ix} As such the **City of Montreal has a moral obligation to respect these goals**. For those to whom much is given, much is required.

Mayor Denis Coderre

Mayor Denis Coderre, on a number of occasions, has commented on "sustainable development" by stating that "sustainable development" is made up of two words and one of them is development". In fact "sustainable development" cannot be broken into its components without changing its meaning. Development without sustainability is not sustainable and it is very sad that the Mayor does not understand this. It is even sadder that the Mayor of the host city of Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity does not understand the importance of biodiversity to the future of the city and to its youth and to the youth of the world. His vision is very short term at best.

Conclusion

1. The entire area known as l'Anse-a-l'Orme must be protected and therefore the development of the 185 hectares of land in Pierrefonds West must be stopped.
2. The City of Montreal must acknowledge that the loss of biodiversity, along with climate change are the two most important problems facing mankind and all future generations.
3. The City of Montreal must also acknowledge that the loss of biodiversity, along with climate change are mostly caused by human actions and that the loss of biodiversity is mostly caused by habitat destruction.
4. The Communauté Métropolitain de Montréal, in the PMAD document, has set an overall target for the CMM to protect 17 percent of its land surface. However, the city of Montreal, the city of Laval, the communities of the north shore, and the cities of the south shore, with the exception of the Agglomeration of Longueuil, have set targets that are insufficient to reach the overall target of 17 percent.
5. The City of Montreal acknowledges that it has only protected 6 percent of the land surface of Montreal while setting a target to protect 10 percent. The four percent difference represents 2,000 hectares and there is not sufficient green space remaining on the island of Montreal to reach this target.
6. The City of Montreal must direct all future development to "brown fields", land that was previously developed and now is abandoned.
7. Ten percent of the island of Montreal consists of "brown fields" which can be rehabilitated and redeveloped thus protecting the remaining natural spaces on the island of Montreal.

On December 14, 2015 the Sierra Club with the support of other environmental groups demanded a moratorium on development within the boundaries of the island of Montreal. ^x I support a modified version of this resolution and ask that the city ban all development of the remaining natural spaces on the island of Montreal and that must include the development of Pierrefonds West.

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- ⁱ Revenge of Gaia: Why the Earth is Fighting Back, James Lovelock, Penguin, February 22, 2007
- ⁱⁱⁱ Avian Species reported in the Kestrel Fields, unpublished report, Richard Gregson, Phd, July 2015
- ⁱⁱⁱ Le Devoir, La moitié des espèces d'oiseaux sont menacées; sur 314 espèces en danger, 50 se retrouvent sur le territoire québécois, 10 septembre 2014, page 1
- ^{iv} The impacts of the Cap Nature real estate project (Pierrefonds West) on ecological connectivity, a private study, Maria Dumitru, Bronwyn Rayfield, Jérôme Dupras, Andrew Gonzalez, Jochen Jaeger, Marie-Ève Roy, February 2016
- ^v The Diversity of Life, Edward O Wilson, W W Norton, May 1, 1999
- ^{vi} Mal de Terre, Hubert Reeves and Frédéric Lenoir, Points, September 28, 2015
- ^{vii} <https://www.cbd.int/history/>, History of the Convention, Introduction
- ^{viii} Half-Earth: Our Planets Fight for Life, Edward O Wilson, Liveright, March 22, 2016, page 167
- ^{ix} <https://www.cbd.int/secretariat/>
- ^x Un moratoire réclamé pour les espaces verts, Journal Metro, December 15, 2015, page 10