

BRIEF to the Office de Consultation Publique de Montreal
in regards to the Development of Pierrefonds West in the
L'Anse-a-L'Orme Corridor

**SUBMITTED by Ross Stitt, resident and Co-Founder of Sauvons L'Anse-a-
L'Orme**

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I have been a resident of Pierrefonds for the last twenty-seven years and have been a witness to many changes in this area during this time and unfortunately, many of these have not been for the better. My main concern would relate to a diminishing quality of life caused by two factors. The first is the ever-increasing volume of cars and thus traffic on our roads along with the accompanying congestion that this causes; and this being, not only on the main road arteries that travel north-south and east-west (e.g. Sources, St. Jean, St Charles, Pierrefonds and Gouin Boulevards) but also on the side streets that pass by our homes where speeding and safety concerns, parking and traffic are ever-increasing problems. This also affects our quality of air and therefore, our health. The reliance and the dependence on the automobile and the ever-increasing number of them (per family) has indentured us to them and this, despite the implementation of more Rush-hour bus routes and Dedicated bus lanes. The second area of concern for this reduction in quality of life would be the loss of natural green space and the densification of our neighbourhoods and streets. The population of Pierrefonds, twenty-seven years ago was under 50,000. persons whereas now (with the inclusion of small Roxboro), it is over 70,000. We have witnessed the build-up of and encroachment by new housing and commercial units throughout Pierrefonds/Roxboro as well as other locations on and off the Island.

But one of the main reasons that myself and others, chose to live here is that we are so close to nature. We have the two regional parks at Cap St. Jacques and L'Anse-a-l'Orme as well as the 185 hectares in question which are the former farm fields which abound with nature (on the east side of Chemin L'Anse-a-L'Orme). If one continues west, you will continue to be surrounded by nature and green space as you pass through Bois-de-la Roche into Senneville (home to Carya Farms) and then Ste. Anne-de-Bellevue. There still exists a vibrant farming community in this Corridor with Carya, les Trois-D-Pierres, Bois-de-la-Roche and MacDonald Campus of McGill University. Biking, hiking, swimming, bird watching, nature-loving, cross-country skiing and snow-shoeing are available here for all to enjoy and not just inside the two parks but in the entire area. I personally have done all of these activities. Many people come out here to escape from the City to experience nature.

To allow the construction of a huge housing development of almost six thousand (6,000.) new doors along with three (3) new schools and commercial units, etc. within this area will permanently change its nature in a totally negative way. It will destroy animal, bird, and plant habitat by destroying the green space in which they live and reproduce. Since this green space purifies our air and helps cool the temperature, with its loss the air quality will be much worse, the temperature will increase. This loss of natural space combined with the addition of over ten thousand (10,000.) more vehicles will increase carbon emissions dramatically and thus add to the GREENHOUSE effect and Global Warming. More does not mean better and in fact, in this case, will mean the Opposite, which is worse!!! More houses, more roads, more vehicles MEANS less Green Space, less Bio-Diversity and Poorer Physical and Psychological Health (due to poorer air quality, less exercise and freedom, and more stress).

WHY MUST THIS 185 HECTARES OF GREEN SPACE BE PRESERVED????

1) The Need for Natural Green Space

This 185 hectares of green space "en friche" is the last, largest, unprotected area left on the Island of Montreal and is a large parcel (on the east side) of the Corridor L'Anse-a-L'Orme. It is part of a natural Green Belt that runs from Lake of Two Mountains south to Angell Woods in Beaconsfield. It passes through Ile Bizard, Pierrefonds, Senneville, Ste. Anne-de-Bellevue, Kirkland and Beaconsfield. This land is the habitat to over two hundred and seventy species (270) of birds, animals, and plant/vegetation

including approximately sixty (60) deer. (Footnote No. #1). Some of these species are listed on the Environment Canada Public Registry of Species at Risk (Footnote#2). The birds use this Land as their reproductive habitat and migrate to/from the area as do other species. Where will they and the other species that live here go to survive if 'their habitat' is taken from them??

Connectivity is an important element in species survival. They cannot just remain in certain areas but they need Buffer Zones to protect them and allow adequate space to live, roam and hunt for food. In other words, you cannot destroy Green Space in one part of this Corridor (e.g. on the east side of L'Anse-a-L'Orme Rd.) without affecting all the species that use the whole Corridor space (East, West, North and South). This is why Sylvain Perron, the Co-ordinator of le Mouvement Ceinture Verte, stated that the Pierrefonds Development Project or "Cap Nature" (so ironically NAMED BY THE DEVELOPERS), should not be allowed. IF ALLOWED, THIS CORRIDOR WITH ITS INHERENT SPECIES WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO MAINTAIN. "L'Anse-a-L'Orme est manifestement un element central de la Ceinture verte du grand Montreal. En detruisant 185 hectares de milieu naturels, l'établissement d'une infrastructure naturelle majeure sur l'île deviendra impossible" (Footnote #3).

2) Trains, Planes and AUTOMOBILES.

This project will bring over ten thousand(10,000) more vehicles onto our roads. This is not 'Sustainable development or developpement durable'-even with the addition of the Urban Boulevard that will go from Blvd. Gouin to Highway #40(north to south). What will happen once all these vehicles will arrive at Highway #40? This route is presently congested during Rush Hours and Accidents but will become UNMANAGEABLE IF THIS PROJECT goes through. The #40 will become a Huge Parking Lot and will contribute to all the negative items mentioned above regarding the Earth's and our health! Montreal has stated its desire to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 30% below 1990 levels by the year 2020(Footnote #4). How can this Target be Achieved with more cars on the road?

3) Urban Sprawl

The development of this Project will increase Urban Sprawl. Despite the fact that the REM(i.e. Projet de Réseau Électrique Métropolitain de transport collectif) would aspire, hopefully, to take cars off the road and encourage public transit, we cannot be assured that this will occur. There can be no guarantee that these new arrivals in these 10,000. Cars that live in Cap Nature will be going to the new Kirkland Station (located north of #40 near rue Jean Yves.) to take the train rather than driving into Montreal or elsewhere. The REM will add to Sprawl by making this new housing development more attractive to potential purchasers who can purchase a housing unit near a train station. A good marketing tool! This station, unfortunately, will add additional pressure to develop L'Anse-a-L'Orme. I believe, however, that the overall use of the car will not diminish but will increase.

Footnotes

#1. David Suzuki Report #1,#2 on Pierrefonds West. Marie-Eve Roy et Jerome Dupras. University of Quebec at Outaouais. Feb. 2015, 2016.

#2. "Avian Species of the Kestrel Fields". Richard Gregson, June 2015.

#3. Cite Nouvelles. Jan.4, 2017.

#4. Global Warming Adaptation Plan for the Island of Montreal for 2015-2020. Mtl. Gazette. Nov.24, 2015. Page A6.

More roads, more cars equal more Traffic. People living nearby the Station will become hostage to transit users/neighbourhood invaders who will arrive from outside areas(e.g. Vaudreuil/Dorion) to drive through their streets to park at the REM parking lot that will accommodate 2,000. Vehicles.

4) Negative Impact on Neighbourhoods

If this Project is permitted, there will be a large negative impact on existing residents in their communities. Some reasons have been stated above. Do local residents want this Project? The answer is a resounding NO. Many, if not most, moved out to west Pierrefonds and Timberlea (Kirkland), to be closer to Nature which would contribute to a higher quality of life. Pierrefonds residents that live on streets off of Gouin Blvd. (both sides) do not want it nor do the residents in Heritage-sur le-lac. How do I know? Because I have spoken with many of them over the last two years at their homes, in their neighbourhoods, and at community events. Do the students and their parents and their teachers (École Charlemagne) want it beside them? The same answer- NO. What will be the effects on the two existing Parks at Cap St. Jacques and L'Anse-a-L'Orme be? Will the users of the Parks (Montrealers) continue to use them as before when they will now encounter a small City across the street from them with all the negative aspects forementioned? Perhaps not.

Do our neighbours in Timberlea, Kirkland want this Project? No because I have gone door-to-door there and not one person among hundreds said that they want this. As this Corridor passes through Kirkland, getting close to the #40, the land narrows considerably when it shifts to the West between the homes on the west side and the elementary school Margaret Manson on the east side. There is not room here for a six lane, north/south Urban Boulevard. Will the Minister of transport have to re-possess the land and close down the School; there? Have Mayor Gibson of Kirkland and Mayor Beis of Pierrefonds adequately informed their citizens of this Project? If the residents do not want this, then why are our Mayors not respecting the wishes of their electorate? Whose interests are they advocating for? Local neighbourhoods will be over-run with traffic which will dramatically affect their quality of life. Traffic gridlock creates a Trickle-down effect where road users use local streets as short cuts to avoid congestion.

According to the City of Montreal's Master Plan (i.e. PMAD), all future development should be transit oriented development (i.e. TOD). By definition, this means that all development should occur within a quarter mile or a five –seven minute walk to a transit hub. (Footnote #5). The Kirkland Station would not fit this definition. Despite the REM, the Pierrefonds West Development is CONTRARY to TOD!!!

5) Follow the Money. Who Pays for What?

Our Mayor Beis has been asked several times at several different Council Meetings if the City or Borough has done a Cost benefit analysis of this Project. His answer has been consistent by answering that as far as he knows, no study of this type has been done. He stated that it would be a good idea to have that information and hopefully, it will be done and submitted. When? There are many examples of situations where the tax-paying public are left paying for items that the developers were supposed to pay for. This would be in regard to infrastructure costs of new roads, sidewalks, sewers, water pipes, hook-ups, etc. How do we know that the residents will not end up being on the hook for paying for these costs? What guarantee will the Borough/City give us, "les payeurs de taxe"??

Footnote

#5. National League of Cities Sustainable Cities Institute.

What will happen in five, ten or twenty years when the new Infrastructure begins to break down and need repair? While should the taxpayers have to absorb these costs while the developers will be paying nothing and have been long gone with their massive profits from this Project. Should they not pay into a Future Fund to cover these types of expenditures? While I understand it is not the mandate of the OCPM to rule or adjudicate on this, due to its political nature, I believe, however, that this is an important element to be considered. A detailed, unbiased, impartial Cost/Benefit analysis must be done on behalf of the Borough. This would allow the residents a good idea of what this Project would really entail (from a financial point of view). A recent study by Juste Rajaonson shows the negative impact of the Project. (Footnote #6).

The REM Station will also create an inflationary impact on the surrounding neighbourhoods. It is a fact that the closer that one lives to either a metro station or other transit hub, the higher the property values and rents are. (Within 500 metres, 13%; 1,000. Metres, 5.8%; and within 1,500. Metres, 4.7%. Footnote #7). This will lead to higher property taxes and prices for goods and services.

6) The Big Contradiction!

Mayor Coderre constantly states that he wants Montréal to have a minimum of ten percent(10%) of the land as preserved green space. The present figure is five point four percent(5.4%). Toronto, by comparison, has over ten percent(10%). The only way to attain this ten percent(10%) figure would be to transform brown fields to green. The recent cutting of over one thousand trees(1,000) at Parc Jean Drapeau and many on the Falaise St. Jacques as well makes one wonder if this is just more 'lip service' by the Mayor. He wants to destroy the 185 hectares of green space by encouraging the Development of L'Anse-a-L'Orme while pretending to be GREEN. This is totally unacceptable. He talks out of both sides of his mouth. Unfortunately, being part of Montreal with our current Mayor being under Mayor Coderre, we have much less autonomy than if we were a de-merged City.

I have said to Mayor Coderre at his Press Conference on June 26,2015 and several times afterwards that... "We, the residents, do not want this Project". I have asked on many occasions the question..."so who does want it and who will it benefit?" No answer was ever given by Mayors Coderre or Beis.

I am a proud Member and Co-Founder of Sauvons/Save L'Anse-a-L'Orme(with Sue Stacho and Don Hobus). We are a grass-roots, citizens group founded in May 2015 whose sole goal is to stop this Development of 5,600. housing units and to preserve and protect this 185 hectares upon which this new City would be built. Montreal Mayor Denis Coderre (accompanied by Borough Mayors Jim Beis of Pierrefonds/Roxboro and Russell Copeman of NDG/Cotes des Neiges), announced this Plan on June 26, 2015 at a Press Conference at the Chalet at Cap St. Jacques Regional Park.

Footnotes

#6. Juste Rajaonson. "Analyse des Contraintes, Coûts et Impacts d'un Éventuel Projet Immobilier dans le secteur Pierrefonds-Ouest/L'Anse-a-L'Orme. UQAM École des sciences de la gestion. Département d'étude urbaines et touristiques. Fevrier 2017.

#7. La Presse, January 13,2015.

We meet on a regular basis. We wrote a Petition and started going everywhere with it to get signatures and to make citizens aware of this Project and ways to oppose it. We attended all Council Meetings in our Borough and at Montreal Hotel de Ville and many at the Agglomeration Council and at adjacent Cities and Boroughs (e.g. Pte. Claire; Beaconsfield; Senneville; Ste. Anne-de-Belleville; Dollard

des Ormeaux; St. Laurent, etc.). We attended as many community events as possible and some Forums and Conferences (especially any that were environmentally inclined). We went door-to-door in Pierrefonds West (including Heritage-sur-le-lac) and the Timberlea area of Kirkland. We lobbied politicians at all three levels of government (especially during the Federal Election Campaign of 2015). We wrote briefs to the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement (i.e. BAPE) on the REM train and to the City of Ste- Anne-de-Bellevue regarding their particular urban plan (PPU) for their northern sector. WE spoke with and were interviewed by various media. We sponsored an Art Exhibit in Plateau Mont. Royal and we even had a 30 kilometre Pilgrimage from Mount Royal to L'Anse-a-L'Orme. We started bringing people out to the Land to show them what we are fighting for and continue to do so. We set up a Website and a Facebook page. We along with our legal Counsel filed two injunctions related to one parcel of land and to the Road. We spoke with and help organize students at Cegep Gerard Godin and the FEC (i.e. Federation les CEGEPS de Quebec); also at Concordia, McGill, John Abbott, UQUAM, ecole Charlemagne, and Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School etc. We, obviously, participated in all the recent events and hearings of the OCPM regarding Pierrefonds West.

Sauvons has received widespread support from local residents and citizens throughout Montreal and off-Island as well. Many local and international environmental groups have supported us. Projet Montreal, the Official Opposition at City Hall, has supported us and had officially asked for a Moratorium on green space development. This, unfortunately, was voted down by Equipe Coderre. Vrai Changement, the official Opposition Party in Pierrefonds, has also supported the preservation of this Land and its Motion to this effect was also voted down by Mayor Beis and Councillors Talbot and Gignac. Our famous Petition presently has over eighteen thousand signatures (18,000.). When we mention this Development, we often hear..."Enough is enough" or "What, more condos?" People are fed up with constant development!

RECOMMENDATION

I suggest that the City purchase this Land (the 185 Hectares) and/or swap this Land for City-owned land that the Developers (five owners) could build on elsewhere. The City could ask Quebec and Canada for funds to do so (whether in cash or in long-term loans). Even the Caisse de Depot could have a financial stake in this joint venture. Under no circumstances, should the value of this land be the future, foreseen value after projected Development (i.e. the speculative value); but should be the current assessed value or even the past value of 2009 before the lots tripled in value in 2012 evaluation role. No real estate owner is legally guaranteed an increase in the value of their investment (i.e. guaranteed a profit). One who speculates is not entitled to a financial windfall. Once this Land is purchased, it should be subject to the status of "Permanent Protection" and a process can be initiated as to its future usage; whether as an addition to the existing Parks or some other new usage. This would guarantee for future generations, the right to access this beautiful landscape. I thank you, the Commissioners of the OCPM, for your consideration in this matter but I plead with you to make the right and just recommendations.