

Presentation to the *Office de consultation publique de Montréal*  
concerning the closure of Chemin Camilien Houde - Remembrance Road

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The purpose of this presentation is to make the following points :

1. This pilot project was done without proper prior consultation.
2. The closure of the roadway in effect was the appropriation of access to a public park for the benefit of a small minority of the local population (i.e. speed cyclists).
3. The closure entailed serious inconvenience to a vast number of people.
4. Environmental protection is a smokescreen cloaking the City's real intention of removing vehicles from the mountain permanently.

1. The pilot project and the lack of proper consultation

The pilot project was foisted on the population by the present City administration without any advance consultation. In democratic municipalities, no such major initiative should be permitted without giving the people most directly concerned a full and fair opportunity to express their views. The way the pilot project was implemented suggests that the decision to implement the closure was already made before this consultation began.

Why was this project even considered when there was a petition of some 25,000 signatures opposing it, and the petition supporting the closure had only about 10,000 signatures? Will this consultation make any difference, or is permanent closure already a done deal ?

2. The closure will appropriate the roads concerned for the use of a minority

The closure of chemin Camilien Houde -- Remembrance Road in effect constitutes the appropriation of this public thoroughfare for the benefit of a very limited number of individuals, notably competitive cyclists training for speed cycling competitions. Other residents of, and visitors to, the Island of Montreal will thus be deprived of the use of this roadway. Even purely recreational cyclists, in many cases, have avoided using the road concerned during the pilot project, since they find the terrain too difficult for them to navigate easily.

3. Serious inconvenience to many

The closure of this thoroughfare during the pilot project has engendered various and serious difficulties for large numbers of Montreal Island residents and visitors. Great numbers of Montrealers traditionally used chemin Camilien Houde - Remembrance Road for travelling from east to west or west to east in a convenient and direct manner, many of them on a daily basis, for accessing their homes or places of work. The closure required them to face the increased traffic on other arteries around the mountain, resulting in further congestion and loss of time in moving from their points of origin to their destinations. In addition, the closure also impeded access to the mountain for handicapped people, who would otherwise have been able to drive or be driven from Côte-des-Neiges Road to the Lookout on the mountain's eastern slope. The same difficulty has faced visitors wishing to access the Lookout from the west during the pilot project. Other citizens

gravely inconvenienced by the closure were those wishing to visit graves in Mount Royal Cemetery from chemin Camilien Houde. They were forced to access the Cemetery through its main gates in Outremont, to which access by car is more complicated. The pilot project also detracted from the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike, who were formerly able to drive across the mountain, admiring the beautiful views that such transits afforded of the surrounding landscape, extending far into the distance.

#### 4. The City of Montreal's real intention behind the closure

It has been argued that the closure will enhance the enjoyment of the mountain as a public park and protect it as a green environment. One wonders whether this pilot project is only the first step towards the complete elimination of vehicular access to Mount Royal. One is tempted to think that the environmental argument is being used as an excuse that will be invoked, sooner or later, for banning all cars and other vehicles from the mountain, perhaps (once more) without proper prior consultation with the population affected.

My opinion regarding this pilot project was well expressed by Arlene Lutter, in a letter to the editor of the Westmount *Independent*, published November 20, 2018, under the title "Opposing Plante, Taking Back Our Mountain". The letter reads in part as follows:

Based on utilitarian principles of democracy – the greatest good for the greatest number --- Montreal Mayor Valérie Plante should reverse what has been her blatant disregard of these principles by returning our mountain to the many: thousands of families, elderly, handicapped, cemetery visitors, motorists who treasure the 10-minute drive over the mountain for a bit of country in our urban world, and tourists, all of whom, in Josh Freed's words, were the "losers" during her five-month pilot project.

They did not go to the mountain this summer because she made access so obstructive and unwelcoming. Rather, she gave the mountain to the very few, i.e. the super-fit, 18-to-30 aged cyclists and denied it to the rest of us.

Moreover, the City of Montreal's self-serving, deeply flawed report and Luc Fernandez's egregious claim that the pilot project was a success defy the facts on the ground.

Mayor Plante's approval rating, being already low, and, should she not return our mountain to us, most assuredly she will be a one-term mayor.

Chemin Camilien Houde – Remembrance Road must be kept open permanently. Speed limits can be reduced and enforced and concrete barriers can be erected to prevent the U-turning that killed the young cyclist. Those solutions are workable and affordable. They would solve the real problem, without depriving the majority of us of a practical, convenient and beautiful route for our use and enjoyment.

Thank you for hearing me this evening.