

# Mémoire

**on the future of L'Anse-à-L'Orme in  
Pierrefonds West**

Presented to the Office de la  
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Presented by

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My name is Rev. Neil Whitehouse. I am minister for Westmount Park United Church. I have a formation in Zoology (BSc Honours Liverpool 1983). My church has a Faith in Nature programme and became aware of the issues of wild space and urban sprawl on the island of Montreal that have been brought to a crisis with the proposed Cap-Nature project.

I wish to offer insights from the point of view of a church that is pro-science and pro-people.

The word oikos, meaning house or household, is the root word for ecology, economy and ecumenics (the latter usually applies to inter-denominational and inter-faith relationships)

I believe this is no mere word play but an indication of the necessary connection between these three phenomenon. The **life** of the 'house' (ecology) and the **relationships** of the 'house' (ecumenics) affect the **management** of the 'house' (economics).

You are receiving sound scientifically based arguments that the proposed Cap-Nature development is neither good for natural life, nor good for human relationships, and cannot therefore be good economics, not in the sense of public good and this is I believe the mandate of the OPCM to determine.

**Not good for life:**

You will have received ample evidence of the destruction of habitat that supports important biodiversity of life.

There are important studies on the contribution such habitats make to human well-being in terms of health, education and social life.

It is important to realise that wild space is a particular form of green space, bringing more life, more benefits than say a manicured park of the same size.

**Not good for relationships:**

Urban sprawl is already a severe problem for the island of Montreal. The phenomenon can be defined and measured, as found in 'Accelerated urban sprawl in Montreal, Quebec City and Zurich,' Nazarnia, Schwick and Jaeger, published in Ecological Indicators 2015. Urban sprawl can be summed up as people taking more space, so for Montreal a relatively low population growth over the last ten years has been far outstripped by the amount of space our population is using in its collective work and leisure life. The problem has been recognised by the Greater metropolitan Montreal Council and a committee is being set up to evaluate and address the problem.

I would contend the Cap Nature project is a very serious example of the damage urban sprawl represents to our collective life and it needs to be stopped, because it is invalid in its own terms and also crucial in marking the end of an out of control era, of urban sprawl.

The OCPM may have difficulty in clearly ruling the end of the Cap Nature project but I hope it can ensure a delay, with a recommendation that the soon to be established Greater Metropolitan Montreal committee take the project as a prime example.

**Not good economics:** I believe the OCPM has a role to help us to recognise the limits of reducing economics to a question of flow of money. Notwithstanding some work has been done to present natural resources within conventional economic terms to allow a comparison of costs and benefits to be made and you may draw important conclusions from this comparison.

I wish to conclude in bringing together economics ecology and ecumenics, in a manner that a minister may be permitted to make: to recognise there is a spiritual crisis of purpose and integrity and hope, in our social life - Can we change as individuals and as interested groups and in running systems, to be sustainable and even better to flourish as nature does flourish when a healthy balance is achieved? Part of the hope that is desperately needed is to realise ordinary people can say NO to projects that resemble the same unrestrained destruction past generations have witnessed and bitterly regretted.

Yours sincerely

Rev. Neil Whitehouse