

Please Protect l'Anse-à-l'orme

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Anse-à-l'Orme in Pierrefonds-Roxboro is a 220 hectare expanse of wet meadows, forest and fallow agricultural lands. It is also home to more than 270 species of fauna and flora, including several endangered species such as the bobolink bird and Canadian Black Snakeroot, a wild plant.

L'Anse-à-l'Orme is part of the largest wildlife corridor on the Island of Montréal, a network of forests and fields that includes Cap-Saint-Jacques, the Morgan Arboretum, Parc-Agricole du Bois-de-la-Roche, the Ecoterritory of Senneville Forest, and Angell Woods. The diverse habitats of the l'Anse-à-l'Orme corridor include Montréal's only remaining inland river (rivière à l'Orme) and support the richest biodiversity and the last unprotected large wild green space on the Island of Montréal.

Unfortunately, this last refuge of exceptional intrinsic value is threatened by an invasive species—developers, who want to undertake a 185-hectare, 5500-house development project.

This housing project would be a disastrous example of urban sprawl. It would compromise the integrity of the existing ecosystems of that area, and species that live there now would have nowhere to go. They would be doomed: Loss of habitat is the main cause of animal and plant extinctions.

In addition, the proposed construction project would do nothing to improve the life of Montréalers—in fact, it would increase traffic and pollution, it would increase the heat island effect and contribute to global warming, and it would change irremediably the future of Montréal.

What will the Montréal of the future look like?

Did you know that the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity is based in Montreal, Canada? Wouldn't this indicate to you that Montréal should be at the forefront of sustainable practices that preserve precious ecosystems and biodiversity like l'Anse-à-l'orme?

I am asking the City of Montréal to cancel this project, which is unacceptable, whether one looks at it from a moral, legal or practical point of view. In taking steps to protect the l'Anse-à-l'Orme ecoterritory in its entirety, the City of Montréal is moving closer to honouring its own promise and objective to conserve seventeen percent of its land. I would suggest that city officials focus their attention on sustainable development, finding innovative, progressive projects to optimize the use of the existing space occupied by humans on the Island of Montréal.

I join my voice to all the other caring Montreal citizens who are beseeching the City of Montréal to preserve this entire space, and in so doing, protect and assure the future of our natural flora and fauna, and of future generations of Montréalers.

Sincerely,
Frances Olsen
[Mrs.]

I grew up on the West Island in what was Beaufort back in the late 40's and 50's, at which time the area was largely farm lands with wooded areas, streams and so on.....the perfect playground for young children to grow up in and of course the lake to visit and swim in. We were gone all day in the summers, out playing on our own, exploring, climbing trees, listening to bird songs, building straw forts, racing leaf, or twig boats down spring streams, visiting the sugar shack, catching tadpoles, cutting catkins and pussy willows and in summer, swimming. By the time I was 12, housing developments began to fill in all the farmland and soon the lake was polluted and no longer swimmable. These experiences taught me so much and gave me a lifelong love for nature. Today's children grow up with little, or no, exposure to natural spaces and little, if any, freedom to go out on their own and play in nature. Who will be the defenders of nature and wild life in the future? What kind of dead world are we leaving for our grandchildren? Already the bees and butterflies are being killed in large numbers and without them there will be no pollination of our plant life, as more and more trees are cut down there is less cleansing of the city's air and more respiratory problems.

A few years ago, I went with a group of all ages, on an animal tracking expedition to the l'Anse-à-l'Orme ecoterritory. What a wonderful time we had in spite of extreme cold and deep snow to trudge through. We saw many animal tracks and other things left by animals traveling through this area. The children had a marvellous time and learned a lot, as did we all from our leader. Why are we so short-sighted?

We live on Ile- Bizard with it's wonderful Nature Parc, but even here, each year more and more housing and golf course encroach on the park. This Nautre preserve is still on the books in Laval's planning for an extension to Aut. 440—when is this going to be taken off the books? We kayak all along the shore heading west and see many, many bird species, bitterns, egrets, herons, eagles, osprey, wild turkeys, to name a few, plus ducks and geese. This shoreline should also be preserved. There are so few places now for migrating and nesting birds. The Techno-Parc is another area that is heart-breakingly being destroyed. When will we wake up? When will we place ourselves at the forefront of preservation and greenspace and be a model to other cities? We have an opportunity now to do this, to build on the small beginnings that are there.....we can choose intelligently and wisely or not, its up to us. We are the keepers of the land and the plants and animals....what will we choose to leave behind?

Fran Olsen