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Office de consultation publique de Montréal AVENIR DU SECTEUR PIERREFONDS-OUEST

I wish to enter into consideration the following points regarding the future development of the western Pierrefonds proposed housing development.

1. I have reviewed the presentation (goo.gl/W9WykR) from the City of Montreal and acknowledge the well-developed plans for the existing Anse-à-l'Orme corridor, including the bay, the watercourse and the standing woodlands as well as the proposed buffer zones around the wetland areas within the site to be built on. I find it unfortunate that this presentation takes the future development as a foregone conclusion and makes no attempt to explain the justifications for such a, in my opinion, destructive venture on this important and unique green space.
2. I draw your attention to a report that I prepared in June 2015 concerning the birds that are associated with the fields under threat of development (referred to below as the "Kestrel Fields"). I believe you that this document may already have been submitted to you by other persons/groups speaking to this issue but it can be downloaded from this link: goo.gl/h7SYOS
3. The Kestrel Fields, together with adjacent land comprises an irreplaceable part of the West Island Green Corridor, extending from the Senneville Migratory Bird Sanctuary (Federally mandated) to the Morgan Arboretum, Parc-agricole Bois-de-la-Roche, Anse-à-l'Orme, Angell Woods, Cap-St-Jacques and Ile Bizard as well as the Kestrel Fields themselves. (*Note: the City's presentation referenced above - para 1 - clearly explains the conservation importance and relevance of the existing green corridor in the west of the island.*)
4. Although not a part of Montreal's network of Nature Parks (<http://goo.gl/je1MTn>) it is considered that the Kestrel Fields are in many ways of equal or greater ecological significance than some of those sites that are so designated. The six city nature parks in total amount to just 1300 hectares ... thus losing the Kestrel Fields to development would represent the removal of an area equal to almost 15% of all of the nature park lands of Montreal in one blow.

5. It seems that the land scheduled for development has been dismissed by developers and councillors as "just waste land", scrubby abandoned fields of little or no conservation value. Nothing could be further from the truth. As my report pointed out, apart from contributing to the continuity of the West Island Green Corridor, the Kestrel Fields also, and most especially, contain a type of habitat type otherwise mostly absent from the corridor. Indeed, otherwise largely absent from the island of Montreal. Large areas of the corridor, for example the Arboretum and most of Anse-à-l'Orme, are forested and thus provide homes for forest species of animals and plants whereas the Kestrel Fields are grassland intermixed with abandoned hedgerows and first-growth succession plant species - essential, and rarely found, features in this region. Thus, there are plants and wildlife living in these fields that will not thrive elsewhere - remove this habitat and the biodiversity of the region will be diminished immediately and irremediably. Many species live in the adjacent forest but hunt over the fields; they need food they can only find in the fields and thus losing the fields will cause a loss of species of forest birds as well as those more specialist grassland species.
6. A total of 160 species of birds have been reported in the Kestrel Fields and the immediately adjacent habitats of Anse-à-l'Orme and Cap-St-Jacques (there being considerable exchange of species between local sites as they move around in search of nesting territory and food). These birds include representatives of both forest, grassland and "edge" habitat species as well as wetland species and migratory birds that pause here in passage for essential feeding and rest. There are songbirds, raptors, insectivores - in fact representatives of most families of birds. There are even breeding ducks despite it not including lakeshore access. The birds listed include the following species of particular note:
 - 13 species of national concern (vulnerable or threatened)
 - At least 3 additional species that are locally rare or vulnerable
 - Perhaps uniquely, all 10 of the species of Owl that occur in this region (of which one is a species of national concern) have been reported from this site.
 - There are breeding individuals of the American Kestrel and the Northern Harrier; iconic raptors for which this is perhaps the last remaining breeding territory on Montreal island.

- This is one of the very few sites in the region where the vulnerable grassland bird, the Bobolink, is able to nest and raise young. This species is entirely dependent upon grassland habitat such as this and will not be able to find alternative breeding habitat if this area becomes unavailable to it. Indeed, the precipitous decline in the population of Bobolinks throughout the continent is directly related to constant habitat loss due to agriculture and building developments.

Other biologists, naturalists and concerned citizens will speak to you of the plant, insect, amphibian and mammalian species that will be lost to the islands wildlife community if development of these fields is allowed to proceed. They, along with the birds I have commented on, are not only of value to citizens seeking one of the few remaining spaces for peaceful recreation but also have intrinsic value in their own right. This is not habitat that can ever be restored or reclaimed or replaced once lost to construction.

I urge those in charge of this public consultation to recommend that the proposed development not be permitted.

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