

My Opinion – Is the Borough of Pierrefonds capable to handle a Major Capital Appropriations Residential Project ?

The following is a summary of my observations regarding this Major Capital appropriation project in Pierrefonds-Roxboro.

1. The documentation made available to the taxpayers of the borough of Pfds-Rx [Pierrefonds-Roxboro] to assess the viability of this major appropriations project has not been readily available and is incomplete. This project came to my attention by chance when some friends of mine who all live in the west island suburban towns close to Pfds Montreal noted to me the magnitude of this Capital Appropriation Residential project. This led me to participate at the April 4, 2017 information meeting regarding this matter. I also asked several of my neighbours what they knew about this new housing/infrastructure project in our borough that could increase the population of Pfds-Rx from about 70,000 habitants to perhaps 85,000 or as much as 90000 or more habitants. The mayor and his administration on this project have kept my neighbours and me, in the dark. For many years, we have all heard Mayor Coderre promoting the downtown city center as a hospitable place to raise a family and inviting families to leave the off-island towns to return to Montreal. In one television news broadcast, we had the privilege to see our mayor use a jackhammer to do the work himself, who can forget Jack-Hammer Coderre and his Pfds mailbox show. In all honesty, I attended the April 4 2017 meeting hoping to come out of this meeting reassured that this project would improve the quality of life for all in Pfds-Rx. What actually happened to me, especially after hearing Me Cliche, a former environmental minister of the Quebec legislature address the audience, made me disillusioned. Since the April 4 2017 meeting , I have carefully reviewed the information made available to us and I have also spent several hours a week researching this matter in order to understand how my tax dollars are being put to work.
2. My first Question is to the administration. You claim that this project has been in the works since 2005, as noted in your Information document. Why have so few people heard of this plan until now? Was this project part of your 2013 election platform, if not, why are we looking for such a major population increase to Pfds-Rx? Did you, Honorable Mayor Beis, specifically run on this issue to obtain a mandate from the population of Pfds-Rx to invest our tax dollars into this venture? Please keep in mind today there are about 70,000 habitants that reside in Pfds-Rx. . Of the 70,000 residents, there are about 46,500 that are eligible to vote. In the 2013 elections, only 15,771 voters chose to vote, of which 5,276 citizens voted for Borough Mayor Beis. This translates to only 11.3% of the eligible voters who chose to support Mayor Beis. Does the Mayor have the moral authority to proceed with such a major capital appropriation project without obtaining the express consent of his voters, perhaps a referendum vote is necessary on such a large investment, do you not agree?
3. My first concern as a taxpayer is to know I can trust the elected officials in power to put my tax dollars to good use. When I see what is happening elsewhere and I compare my borough of Pfds-Rx and the Agglomerated city of Montreal, I cannot say we are better off today than we were before 2002. The mere fact that the Municipal government of Montreal is composed of a borough council, a city council and an agglomeration council is very difficult and expensive for the taxpayer. All the councillors are members of municipal political parties and are elected by a tiny percentage of citizens who show up to vote. Furthermore, another level of governance is added by the mayor, the Executive committee. The ratio of city dwellers to city administrators and city workers for a city of about 1.7 million people is unacceptable. The Montreal municipal government is much larger than the city of New York council that has 8.4 million people. The **New York City Council** is a unicameral body consisting of **51 members**, each elected from a distinct geographic district. Montreal is 5 times smaller than New York and yet we have about **102** elected officials whereas a city of 8.4 million is governed by 51 elected council members, why?
4. To this day, the 2013 Pierrefonds City Borough has not proceeded to restructure the departments that the Mayor had personally told me he would reorganize to reduce the cash grabs sought by the Pfds-Rx city inspectors. A major construction project that is under consideration will only cause more harm to the Pierrefonds-Roxboro taxpayers.
5. To the Office de Consultation Publique de Montreal [OCPM]: in your presentation of April 4, you made reference, on several occasions, to the 'Vision de mise en valeur - 12 principe.' that the municipal council of Pfds-Rx instructed you to execute.

- 1) In your 'principe 5', you state there will be 5,500 housing units for families. In another document, you mention 5,500 housing units and 1,500 affordable and social housing units. Is it 5,500 or 7,000 units that are being considered in this project?
- 2) Why does your mandate not discuss the possible benefits and risks as part of the 'Growth Study aspect of Pfds-Rx'. Can you confirm that your mandate does not include any Environmental Impact Phase II Study, any Social Impact Assessment study, any Infrastructure impact study, and any growth of Population and Economic Impact study to the borough of Pfds-Rx? Increasing Pfds-Rx's population by over 20% must be part of your examination process before any recommendation can be given to the authorities about the vitality of this project. Why do the Mayor and his administration not include such vital fact finding components as part of your mandate? I did not see any mention in your presentations or literature that eases my concerns on this matter.

In the West island of Montreal, Pierrefonds is referred to as a dormitory or 'Le Dortoire du West Island'. This city has little to no industrial activity, no industrial park, little to no commercial activity, very little research centers. Why does your mandate not investigate the possibility of expanding other revenue generating schemes, allowing people to work locally rather than having to head downtown to be stuck in traffic ?

- 3) I note the arguments you presented and the research I have done on the subject of improved traffic flow thanks to the creation of "**Le Grand Boulevard**" under consideration. I request that the facts presented by your team be supported with scientific empirical data rather than simply making unsubstantiated facts. I was born, raised and schooled in Montreal. We decided to leave Montreal proper and moved to Pierrefonds in 1984. The fact that "La Couronne Nord – Autoroute 440 had been inaugurated in 1974 for the 1976 Olympics and then extended to Autoroute 13, in 1979, contributed to our decision to make Pierrefonds home. It had been announced at the inauguration of A-440 that the original plans of this ring road would have it continued West of Autoroute 13 in the Avenue des Bois corridor, in Laval, and cross La Rivière des Prairies on Bigras and Bizard Islands. On the latter island, the right-of-way is actually a public park. On the Island of Montreal, the A-440 right-of-way is just west of Boulevard Chateau-Pierrefonds. The autoroute would have ended at the Chemin Sainte-Marie interchange (Exit 49) on Autoroute 40. Regrettably, in 1998 Minister Marois influenced the governing PQ government to stop the completion of the North Ring Road. The North Ring Road was meant to alleviate Montreal Traffic on the Metropolitan A-40 and TransCanada to reduce greenhouse gases and improve the longevity of the Montreal Autoroute 40 from Repentigny to the West Island. Le Grand Boulevard, which is what all the levels of government call it now, since before 2011, will not alleviate traffic to the city center of Montreal from the West Island as you are trying to allude. I request that you acknowledge this transport artery, Le Grand Boulevard, will not alleviate traffic in the West Island but rather simply be an alternate access entrance to the T-Canada inbound to Montreal, not alleviating the traffic but rather increasing the congestion and emissions by increasing the burden of the T-Can with more cars. Why do we not reconsider developing the A-440 extension to help improve the fluidity of traffic, cut down on green emissions, and improve the life span of the Metropolitan superstructure? If Hiway A-30 had a Private-Public Partnership for part of the ring road, why not have a PPP on the north shore A-440?
- 4) Why does your mandate not consider one of our existing precious eco-friendly jewels, the existing rail line from PFDS-Rx station to Sunnybrook station to downtown and an improved bus network from Pfds-Rx to the West Island Central Bus terminus at the Fairview Mall as an alternative to the West Island Park conversion to urban space on marshlands?
From my travel and working experience on four continents, why do we not consider building over the Roxboro Train Station, as they do in other urban sectors around the world? A high-rise building over the Pfds-Rx train station could be built with multiple parking levels, a bus terminus, office space to attract professionals to work locally, and have multiple rental or condominiums living spaces to develop the neighborhood into a vibrant economic engine. I would suggest moving the city hall building and the library to this site in order to redevelop the existing site into a more valuable money generating property. There are already many schools that are underutilized in this area and many day care centers exist to accommodate new families.
- 5) At the April 4, 2017 environmental Information session, three men of science were part of your presentation team. Why did all the six members of your team present conflicting facts to the audience? On the one hand, the OCPM stated that the entire West Island Green Space is one and half times larger than

the Mont St. Bruno Provincial Park [www.sepaq.com/pg/msb/] and in the same sentence you indicated your mandate is to ensure the viability of the space. What you cannot do as the City of Montreal, is to impose your values to the neighboring towns. Thus, you correctly articulated the vital importance of the Mont St Bruno and of the West Island green park co-existing with our urban jungle, the city of Montreal. Both of these sites are not, as you noted your typical municipal park where our children play on a baseball field or soccer field or on various playground rides, swings, etc. . In my opinion, since the Mont St Bruno is under the provincial jurisdiction, Sepaq operated and protected as a Provincial Park, the West Island green space deserves at least the same destiny since it is 50% bigger than Mont St. Bruno, as per your comments at the April 4, 2017 meeting. It is worthy to mention that both the provincial and federal levels of government have access to rules, regulations, and resources that are not readily available to the municipal administrations. The mandate of a municipality is to primarily provide safety and security services to its human population, not manage and protect precious eco-systems or Wetlands [marais]. Your scientists stated they did a study in 2008, but when asked to provide empirical data as to the findings of the study, none was available. When your scientists declare that it shall be up to the future builders/owners to provide the science as to the viability of the eco-systems in the West Island Park habitat, in my opinion, you demonstrated your inability to fulfill your mandate by not doing your due diligence properly. [En tant que membres du comité, vous devez agir avec diligence raisonnable]. As a professional engineer, I would define this action as gross negligence.

- 6) In my opinion, part of your mandate is to assess the present state of the property you wish to convert into urban property from its present agricultural and green space natural habitat. Your mandate should it continue to exist and go forward for this site, should be held accountable to perform soil and water monitoring tests over a period of at least 5, perhaps 10 years, in order to set the guideline parameters for the future builders and owners to adhere to as they will be held responsible to protect the eco-system.
- 7) Today, the MDDELCC [Ministry of the Environment – MoE] is presently reviewing the Real estate development projects on wetlands. Please visit www.sodavex.com/.../projets-immobiliers-en-milieux-humides-etc..

Uncertainty related to real estate development on wetlands has been a longstanding concern and you may be interested to review the recent case of Richmond Investments, which led to an interesting judgement.

*Please note the following summary By : Christine Duchaine and Anissa Chekir
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I quote the authors above with the following excerpt.

Continuing confusion

The MDDELCC defends itself for having adopted such an imprecise law by saying they wanted to temporarily fill the void by the annulment of the directive. In fact, the law was to have been replaced by a law providing clear rules regarding the conservation and sustainable management of wetlands and waterways before April 24, 2015. However, last February 25, Minister David Heurtel presented a bill prolonging the delay by three years, to April 24, 2018, while announcing that he would undertake to modernize the environmental authorization process of the LQE. This revision is intended to concentrate efforts on projects having significant environmental impact by reducing the number of requests by projects with little impact.

The delay in adopting new rules pose difficulties for a number of projects, which is not desirable in our currently weak economy. The same is true of the delays in obtaining authorizations. Since developers, municipalities and environmental groups all want clear, predictable and equitable norms, we can only hope that the government will modernize the authorization process and adopt new news concerning development of wetlands before April 2018, all for the good of society and the environment.' - **End of Quote** [some sentence structure issues exist in the above quoted text].

Earlier in the month of April, I spoke with the responsible person for the island of Montreal at the MoE [Montréal, 5199, rue Sherbrooke Est, Bureau 3860, Montréal (Québec) H1T 3X9. Téléphone : 514 873-3636, Télécopieur : 514 873-5662, Courriel : montreal@mdelcc.gouv.qc.ca] inquiring about the new upcoming Marshlands legislation. I learnt that the bill was tabled and it is moving through the provincial legislature. Since the heavy lifting was done with the enactment of the LQE, the new MoE Bill for Marshlands Legislature, is a complimentary/supplementary law to the recently revised MoE law. The Marshlands law is expected to pass with little or no delays. It appears that the April 2018 deadline for this new legislation will be achieved.

Why would the City of Montreal and the OCPM want to finish their work and provide a recommendation before new legislation comes into force? This may have grave consequences on the builders and the property owners who may be expected to comply with these new regulations. This may burden the investment costs or the new laws may disqualify this site as a habitable space. In my opinion, the OCPM should suspend their work and start performing soil and water monitoring tests on this site to ensure an eventual successful implementation is feasible, should the project move forward.

- 8) In my opinion, the small marshland – Marais 90, that you claim to be non-sustainable as it is today, is due to a former development project, Heritage III that has hampered its sustainability. This should demonstrate to you that the present administration at the Borough of Pierrefonds and at the Downtown city center did not do their due diligence, thus the eco-system is slowing dying.

CONCLUSION:

I have been mandated as a professional engineer to represent my investor clients who seek to purchase or sell properties that can be developed into new usages such as housing, commercial, or industrial properties.

With the information that I have obtained from you and the research that I have personally done on this project, I can categorically say that I cannot determine the viability of this project. There is no empirical data or scientific studies available to the paying taxpayer to allow me to recommend the conversion of this green space to an urban setting.

This spring would have been an ideal time to do water monitoring testing of the underground water table. If both Pierrefonds Blvd and Gouin Boulevard were overflowing with water, in the St. Jean Blvd. area close to our city hall. It is highly probable that property damage could occur in this new urban setting where all the street water runoff culverts will backflow from the Ottawa and La Rivière des Prairies into the urban streets and home. A scenario similar to the damages in Rigaud can be envisaged in Pfds-Rx west.

With so few pertinent data available to determine the viability of this site, I would not recommend to my investors they proceed with this residential project.

The West Island Green Space Provincial Park development would be a much wiser project to pursue.

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