



Brief on the Future of Pierrefonds West
Presented to the Office de la consultation
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on behalf of Sauvons l'Anse-à-l'Orme

by Sue Stacho

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My name is Sue Stacho and I am representing the group Sauvons l'Anse-à-l'Orme, a citizen's group that formed in May 2015 to stop the housing and commercial development planned in the l'Anse-à-l'Orme corridor in Pierrefonds West.

In January 2015 the Urban Agglomeration Land Use and Development Plan, which outlines the priorities for Montreal for the next decade in terms of road infrastructure, public transit, residential construction and protection of green spaces was approved by the Montreal city council and the Agglomeration council. In this plan 185 hectares of former agricultural land in the borough of Pierrefonds-Roxboro is earmarked for a low-density housing development. A press conference, held at Cap-Saint-Jacques Nature Park followed in June, 2015 to unveil the 5500-6000 unit housing project. Concerned citizens and members of several environmental groups met to mobilize and thus was born Sauvons l'Anse-à-l'Orme. Our mission statement is simple; To protect 100% of the l'Anse-à-l'Orme corridor. This position comes from a deep commitment to protect the wild character and ecological integrity of the Anse-à-l'Orme corridor for present and future generations of Montreal citizens. After decades of uninterrupted urban sprawl and the destruction of most of Montreal's natural green spaces we have reached a critical point in the battle to survive the ravages of climate change. We cannot afford to lose one more square metre of green space. Any inquiries about a compromise in our position has been, and will continue to be flatly refused.

As stated in Montreal's Green Space Story: Past and Present, by Sylvia Oljemark of the Green Coalition, the scope of Montreal's green space crisis cannot be overstated. When Canadian cities are stacked up against one another, Montreal rates dead last for green space quotas.¹

Public support for the protection of l'Anse-à-l'Orme grows daily and is reflected in these facts:

- Our petition, asking for the City of Montreal and the borough of Pierrefonds-Roxboro to conserve and protect the total area of Rivière à l'Orme Ecoforest Corridor, has over 18,000 signatures to date and we are confident that we will continue to gather more names. Clearly, people are fed up with the loss of green spaces in Montreal.
- Of the 18,000 names on the petition, only 4,676 of these have been collected on-line, (at the date of this text) which means that Sauvons l'Anse-à-l'Orme members have spoken, face-to-face, with 13,324 people about the need to protect this natural area.
- Regarding the on-line petition, since the consultation was announced on March 13, the numbers of supporters increased by 270 names.
- Our facebook page, Sauvons l'Anse-à-l'Orme, has 1076 likes
- In 2016 alone, 39 newspaper articles and reports covered our work

- We held 6 press conferences, 7 kiosks at different events, 17 guided walking tours, and walked 30 kms in a pilgrimage to l'Anse-a-l'Orme
- Sauvons l'Anse-à-l'Orme has attended 23 Pierrefonds council meetings since our formation (that's every one since June 2015), 19 Montreal city council meetings, 14 Agglomeration council meetings, 9 REM open houses.

Through our efforts to raise awareness about this development and seek support for the protection of l'Anse-à-l'Orme, we have discovered this: It is clear that Montrealers want change. A culture of distrust from years of corruption unearthed by the Charbonneau Commission has made many citizens wary of large development projects that claim to bring in more tax revenues than it admits to draining. Students and young adults are worried about the future of the environment and expect our leaders to make sustainable choices when promoting new projects. Children get upset at the thought of animals being displaced or disappearing from their nature parks. Educators are running out of natural settings for teaching and activities in proximity to schools.

Sauvons l'Anse-à-l'Orme opposes any development in the Anse-à-l'Orme corridor for these reasons;

1. The 185 hectares of former agricultural land, now 'en friche', that is slated for the construction of over 5500 housing units is home to some of the region's most important and irreplaceable habitat and biodiversity. These grasslands, large sections of regenerating woodlands, marshes and streams host scores of nesting birds, reptiles and amphibians and healthy populations of small animals that prey species depend upon. It is far too important ecologically to be destroyed.
2. Protecting biodiversity is the responsibility of all levels of government. In the 2004 document POLICY ON THE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF NATURAL HABITATS, Montréal plans to develop conservation projects for sectors encompassing natural habitats of high ecological value measuring 15 hectares or more in area. As well, the city seeks to intervene in sectors which are home to natural habitats of ecological value currently threatened by ongoing development. ⁱⁱ At 365 hectares, l'Anse-à-l'Orme is extremely valuable from an ecological point of view. On the world stage, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was signed at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. Target 5 of the Aichi Biodiversity targets, ensures that by 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced. We need not wait until 2020 to maintain the natural habitat found in l'Anse-a-l'Orme. Nor can we allow the fragmentation of this wildlife corridor. In a two studies released by La Fondation David Suzuki in February 2016, more than 270 species of flora and fauna, some

endangered or vulnerable were identified in the area slated for development in l'Anse-à-l'Orme. ⁱⁱⁱ Also, it was concluded that 'Development in the study area will significantly impact terrestrial biodiversity through a loss of habitat, an increase in landscape fragmentation, and a decrease in functional habitat connectivity'^{iv} Our commitment to protecting biodiversity depends on our actions to protect l'Anse-à-l'Orme and ensure the connectivity between this and surrounding natural areas is secured.

3. Montreal has set a target of protecting 10% of the island as green space in the *Schéma d'aménagement et de développement de l'agglomération de Montréal*, adopted in 2015. To date, less than 6% has been protected. That means that to reach the goal of 10%, the Montreal administration must conserve another 2000 hectares, or the equivalent of 10 Mount Royal Parks! It is imperative that the Coderre administration honors its word to meet its objectives, or risk the disdain of their citizens during an election period.
4. Wild, natural spaces like the ones found at l'Anse-à-l'Orme are very different from the manicured, managed green spaces that are shown in the designs portraying the Cap Nature development. Natural spaces like this provide opportunities to really explore nature in an unstructured setting, a practise that has almost disappeared from today's childhood experiences. Creativity, team work and problem solving skills are all let loose when children spend time in natural settings. Happiness can be a serious side effect.
5. Development in l'Anse-à-l'Orme will severely impact the environment in these ways
 - removing the vegetation cover and replacing it with asphalted surfaces will contribute to the heat-island effect that already plagues Montreal with rising summer temperatures
 - developing on wetlands robs us of the natural water filtration system, flood mitigation and storm damage that these sites provide - for free! The wetlands at l'Anse-à-l'Orme also host a significant amount of biodiversity
 - the trees that will be removed from the development site provide oxygen and air purification for us, habitat for birds and shade to cool the air - all for free!
6. Urban sprawl is out of control in Montreal. Like many other cities, Montreal is growing bigger. Over 80% of us now live in an urban area. As Montreal continues to spread out to Vaudreuil, Laval and the south shore, car-dependency becomes epidemic. Driving long distances in traffic to get work and back every day is stressful for drivers and hard on the environment. But while other cities are curbing the spread of urban sprawl, Montreal's rate is increasing. The location of the Cap Nature project is 25 kilometers from downtown Montreal. That is simply poor planning and short-sightedness. This project needs to be built in smaller sections near city cores and transportation hubs.
7. The traffic problems of the west island are almost unbearable due to unfettered urban sprawl and a culture of car-dependency. Most homes have two or more cars parked in the driveway and public transportation is not a popular choice for many people. Adding

5500-6000 housing units to Pierrefonds West will only exasperate the problem. The city of Montreal would have us believe that a new six-lane urban boulevard alongside the new development will solve most of the rush hour congestion issues. That was likely the same thinking that went into building Boulevard St Jean, St Charles and Boulevard des Sources. But even twenty new mega-roads will not make a difference when they all lead to the same Autoroute - the 40. Until we improve public transportation on the west island to be more convenient than taking your car, no new massive developments in outlying areas should be permitted.

8. The REM is not the improvement to public transportation that Montreal needs. Another poorly planned project that is being blindly accepted and rushed to approval, despite the BAPE recommendations to review the project, the new electric train will see stations put at the southern portion of the l'Anse-à-l'Orme corridor and in portion of the same corridor located in Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue. Which came first; the train or the development?
9. The assertion that housing developments like the one being proposed by the promoters of Cap Nature will bring in tax revenues for the borough of Pierrefonds-Roxboro is one we challenge. In an un-serviced area like l'Anse-à-l'Orme, where water systems, sewers and roads need to be built from scratch at the expense of the borough, it is difficult to understand where a profit to the city will come from. In a study done on the costs of such a project, land development costs, estimated to be between \$ 95.1 million and \$ 103.28 million, are inevitably higher than if the land was located in a similar area connected to various public water infrastructure, sanitation, energy and easily accessible to essential public services such as roads, public transit and public safety.^v

Comments on the Information Document

In the introduction, on page 5, the report states that this plan has been initiated since 2005, and that it lays the foundation for an integrated, family oriented real-estate development and the development of the natural environment. What might have been a good idea in 2005 cannot possibly apply to our environmental needs today. The state of our environment in the year 2005 was a very different environment that we are in today, 2016. We now have average global temperatures that are higher than they were ten years ago. Biodiversity is threatened and species are going extinct 1000 times faster than any other time in the Earth's history. Canada has lost approximately 85% of its wetlands, and our smog alerts are regular occurrences throughout the year.

Also, a family oriented development in 2016 should not be built in an area that results in the loss of a natural area. The families that now reside near l'Anse-à-l'Orme benefit from living so

close to nature and their needs should be considered with more weight than possible future residents.

The introduction also states that 'through this document, the city (of Pierrefonds) submits [their] approach to public debate', but a true debate on the use of this land should also include a proposal to conserve this entire area.

In the section titled, High value natural landscapes and spaces on page 9, it is stated that 'this area harbours several rare floral species and serve as habitats for many animal species'. What the document fails to include is that the brown snake, the northern map turtle, the Jefferson salamander, the milk snake, the bobolink, the wood thrush, the barn swallow, the blue-winged warbler, the barred owl, the chimney swift, Canada's warbler, the rusty blackbird, the grasshopper sparrow, the royal eagle and the American kestrel have also been documented at the site and are of vulnerable or threatened status.^{vi}

In the section, Planning Activities on page 11, it reads, "A panning process involving municipal and government stakeholders as well as major property owners was initiated in 2005, following the adoption of the Master Plan and the Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats in 2004." Were any environmental groups involved in this process? In the Master Plan, three objectives are outlined:

1. 'Maximize biodiversity and increase aggregate hectarage of protected natural habitats in Montréal;

The City of Montréal plans to develop conservation projects for sectors encompassing natural habitats of high ecological value measuring 15 hectares or more in area. The City seeks to intervene in sectors which are home to natural habitats of ecological value currently threatened by ongoing development (Please see map of sectors of intervention). However, the consolidation of a natural habitats in existing parks or ecoterritory could entail renaturalization work in the areas in question. For the purposes of this Policy, size is of the essence if only because ecosystem viability hinges largely upon size. Accordingly, the City seeks to create or consolidate natural corridors conducive to wildlife movement, plantlife dispersion, and recreational and educational activities. To the extent possible, the City further wishes to remedy the lack of natural spaces in certain areas of the island, notably the central and eastern sectors.^{vii}

This objective is being blatantly ignored with the development plans for Pierrefonds West! The Anse-a-l'Orme area is of high ecological value, as stated in the same document on page 24; 'This corridor comprises five distinct natural areas of considerable biodiversity'. The area under threat is 185 hectares which is larger than the 15 hectare limit used in this document. The natural habitats found in l'Anse-a-l'Orme house many rare and threatened animal and plant species such as the bobolink, red-shouldered hawk, Cooper's hawk and brown snake and therefore are of high ecological value. 'Consolidating natural corridors' will not happen when this project will disseminate most of the fields and grasslands that are an essential part of this corridor.

2. 'Ensure the sustainability of natural habitats in existing City parks, and promote the consolidation and viability of park ecosystems.'

Public parks and spaces are home to a number of natural habitats boasting a wealth of biodiversity which the City of Montréal is intent upon preserving. Although these habitats already enjoy a certain protected status, they represent areas threatened by human intervention either inside or outside the boundaries of existing parks. To maintain the integrity of the island's wetlands, sustain flow regimes for area waterways and preserve water quality, it is essential to ensure proper runoff management in new, nearby development projects. To ensure the sustainability of natural habitats in City parks and preserve the integrity of existing ecosystems, Montréal intends also to examine opportunities for ecosystem consolidation when planning new developments on adjacent tracts of land.'

The 'human intervention' that will befall the l'Anse-a-l'Orme Nature Park when a 5500-6000 unit residential project is placed right beside it will most certainly have a devastating impact on the biodiversity and viability of the existing park. As well, 'maintaining the integrity of the wetlands' in l'Anse-a-l'Orme will most likely have a detrimental effect when man-made structures will be created to control the water levels. As witnessed in the lifeless 'lac' or retention basin that was installed in the nearby Heritage sur le Lac housing project to 'maintain' the water level in the former wetland that was built over, human intervention in nature often has negative effects.

3. Foster enhanced integration of ecosystems and natural landscapes in built-up areas

The ecosystems in the Anse-a-l'Orme corridor are important both as individual and interconnected systems. The fields and wetland meadows are habitat to a wide range of species, plant and animal, large and small, that depend on the unique environment available in these ecosystems. Nowhere else, on the island of Montreal, are there open grassland fields left to regenerate, such as those in l'Anse-a-l'Orme. In fact, 18 individuals of the threatened bobolink bird were found nesting in the area slated for development. This species, among others depend on these fields specifically. The Great Grey owl, that lives in the adjoining forests use these fields to hunt for their main food source; voles. Many of the birds of prey listed in the Évaluation Écologique de l'Ouest du Territoire de Pierrefonds-Roxboro use both the fields and forests in an interconnected way, and cannot continue to thrive when one of these ecosystems in removed or hugely downsized.

Regarding Land Tenure

When land speculators purchased the lots in this sector of Pierrefonds West they, like all speculators, took a risk. Would their investment bring a good return or not? This is a calculated risk as in all investments and it should not be expected a guarantee of profit. When commitments were made between the land owners and the city, it should never have been considered a fait accompli, because a

PPU had not yet been finalized. Too often, developers threaten to take legal action against a municipality to compensate them for loss of possible profits if their projects are rejected or downsized. This way of conducting business is morally and economically wrong and needs to stop. The owners of the land in l'Anse-a-l'Orme have an obligation to conduct ethical business practises with the cities of Pierrefonds-Roxboro and Montreal, and the cities have an obligation to the land owners to do the same. Land exchanges must be considered as a viable option for everyone involved. Many areas in the west island and more centrally located to downtown are in desperate need of revitalizing and improvements. Let these developers build this well designed project in other areas, located near public transportation, and on less ecologically sensitive land like brown fields. Engage in the possibility of land trust agreements where the owners receive tax breaks for their donations of land.

Regarding Territorial Vocations

When these lands were zoned as residential, we had no idea what the state of the environment would be in more than a decade later. Now we are in a crisis. Far below our paltry goal of 10% of the land area of the Agglomeration, set in the Schéma d'Aménagement^{viii} as protected green space on the island and very far below the 17% objective of Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 which was adopted as the target for the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM) in objective 3.1 of the 'Plan métropolitain d'aménagement et développement' (PMAD)^{ix} we must stop all developments in the few remaining green spaces left in Montreal. Can we use the same territorial vocations from 13 years ago to plan developments of today? Can we afford to lose more natural areas to urban sprawl? The answer is a clear and resounding 'NO'. Is there any real intention to actually meet the protection objectives?

Projects under Consideration

- Boulevard within the MTMDET right-of-way and the REM

The need for a new urban boulevard and two train stations for the REM would not exist if better planning had gone into the development of the west island. We challenge whether the outcome of these two major structuring projects will improve the quality of life for the current residents of the west island or simply continue to encourage more development and more urban sprawl.

- Ecoterritory of ecoforest corridor or Rivière à l'Orme

The only project that needs consideration and/or planning is one that manages the conservation of the entire undeveloped area in the Anse-à -l'Orme corridor both in the Pierrefonds-Roxboro territory and the Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue territory.

Development Vision

Principal 1. Preservation of a viable ecological corridor and rich biodiversity

The viable ecological corridor and biodiversity found in the part of l'Anse-à-l'Orme that is slated for development cannot be preserved when development is permitted. The impacts are irreversible and permanent.

Principal 2. Development of the swales

The ditches that were once used in conjunction with the agricultural practises served their purpose for irrigation then and now serve another purpose. They are habitat to many aquatic species, reptiles and amphibians. These waterways enhance the ecological value of the land and add to the rich biodiversity found here. They should be used as a marketing tool for developers, but rather used to market the potential of whole area as a wildlife refuge or park .

Principal 3. Integration of Urban Agriculture

This is one principal that we agree on; the integration of various light agricultural activities in this sector. It should be pointed out that bees, and other pollinating insects like butterflies, which are in serious decline need the open fields of grasslands to thrive.

Principal 4. Preservation of the Gouin Boulevard West waterside road

The heritage and character of Gouin Boulevard must be preserved but we have little faith in this effort on the part of the city due to the recent projects that have been approved on this road. Modern style multi-level buildings that sit right up to the sidewalk and a recently approved dump site do not resonate with the Caractère champêtre of the past. A 5500-unit development will add at least 10000 cars to the already congested boulevard so that the quiet, country-like character of this road will be altered forever.

Principal 5. Reaching viable residential density and diversity

A increase in housing can be achieved by densifying central areas of the borough as explained in a study released by the Conseil régional de l'environnement de Montréal^x In fact, the proposed development does not respect the sustainable development orientations of either the CMM's PMAD or Montreal's own Schema d'aménagement. Specifically, the proposed development contradicts these orientations in the following ways: (1) it does not protect natural areas; (2) it does not result in diversification in TOD zones; (3) it promotes the use of automobiles; and (4) it does not revitalize existing neighbourhoods. The CRE Montréal's report also suggests better locations for this new housing development.

Principal 6. Development of a dynamic and accessible multifunctional hub

We challenge the intended location of this 'hub' and recommend that it be put in the îlot St-Jean plans or as an project for the revitalization of the Roxboro commercial center.

Principal 7. Networking of parks and green spaces

Conserving the entire l'Anse-a-l'Orme corridor as a regional, provincial or national park as part of a green belt would enhance this area and the entire island of Montreal.

Principal 8. Creating an efficient and user-friendly road network

Cycling, walking, cross-country skiing and snowshoe trails would be great additions to this area once protected as a regional, provincial or national park.

Principal 9. Quality of the public realm

The public would be very well served by the creation of a regional, provincial or national park here.

Principal 10. Development of exemplary and evocative architecture

Existing central areas of the borough can be improved and beautified by demanding quality architectural features in all projects.

Principal 11. Preventing the formation of heat islands

The very fact that 185 hectares of îlots fraicheurs will be destroyed is contradictory to this principal.

Principal 12. Ecological management of storm water

Wetlands and natural spaces are natural storm water management systems that are functioning very well in their present natural state. It is the very fact that we have removed most of our wetlands that we have water pollution and flooding issues.

In conclusion Sauvons l'Anse-à-l'Orme ask the OCPM to issue the following recommendations in its report:

Recommendation #1: That the PPU proposed for Pierrefonds West, as well as the proposed development it contemplates, be abandoned.

Recommendation #2: That all of L'Anse-à-l'Orme Corridor which is located in the Borough of Pierrefonds-Roxboro be protected from development and its affectation/zoning designation be changed to recreational; and that the same re-designation be implemented for the rest of the Corridor located in other boroughs.

Recommendation #3: That the City of Montreal and the Borough of Pierrefonds-Roxboro negotiate and conclude land exchanges with the developers proposing to build in Pierrefonds West.

Recommendation #4: That all future mandates given by the City of Montreal or its boroughs to the OCPM, involving a reduction in natural areas, explicitly require that the question of conservation be addressed first, and only if conservation is not recommended shall the details of potential development then be considered.

ⁱ Anne-Marie Owens and Mary Vallis; The Intangibles that Define a Community; National Post October 17, 2002

ⁱⁱ POLICY ON THE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF NATURAL HABITATS

ⁱⁱⁱ Évaluation écologique de l'Ouest du territoire de Pierrefonds-Roxboro; Rapport d'étape, Marie-Eve Roy, M.Sc., Professionnelle de recherche, Institut des sciences de la forêt tempérée, Université du Québec en Outaouais; Patrick Gravel, Coopérative de solidarité des Forêts et des Gens;

Jérôme Dupras, Ph.D., Professeur Institut des sciences de la forêt tempérée, Université du Québec en Outaouais

^{iv} The impacts of the Cap Nature real estate project (Pierrefonds West) on ecological connectivity; Maria Dumitru, Bronwyn Rayfield, Jérôme Dupras, Andrew Gonzalez, Jochen Jaeger, Marie-Ève Roy.

^v ANALYSE DES CONTRAINTES, COÛTS ET IMPACTS D'UN ÉVENTUEL PROJET IMMOBILIER DANS LE SECTEUR PIERREFONDS-OUEST/L'ANSE-À-L'ORME; Juste Rajaonson, Département d'études urbaines et touristiques École des sciences de la gestion Université du Québec à Montréal, 15 février 2017.

^{vi} Évaluation écologique de l'Ouest du territoire de Pierrefonds-Roxboro; Rapport d'étape, Marie-Eve Roy, M.Sc., Professionnelle de recherche, Institut des sciences de la forêt tempérée, Université du Québec en Outaouais; Patrick Gravel, Coopérative de solidarité des Forêts et des Gens;

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^{vii} POLICY ON THE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF NATURAL HABITATS, 2004

^{viii} Schéma d'Aménagement et de développement de l'agglomération de Montréal

^{ix} Plan métropolitain d'aménagement et développement'. Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal. March 2012.

^x Analyse du potentiel de développement résidentiel dans l'arrondissement de Pierrefonds-Roxboro, avril 2016