

J'inviterais maintenant madame Yvonne Hiemstra, s'il vous plaît. Bonjour, Madame!

995 **Mme YVONNE HIEMSTRA :**

Bonjour! My presentation will be in English. I hope that's OK.

1000 **LA PRÉSIDENTE :**

It's O.K. for us.

Mme YVONNE HIEMSTRA :

1005 My name is Yvonne Hiemstra. I'm a concerned citizen of Beaconsfield and I have worked with a number of different groups in defending their environmental rights. And when I was creating this presentation, I realized when I was reviewing it this morning, that it had a somewhat frustrated tone. So I apologize for that in advance.

1010 I think many of us feel that defending the environment we have to continuously do and it only takes one developer to get a green light and we've lost that environmental footprint, that environment for nature. And so, we're always having to do this sort of thing.

1015 I wanted to just provide an outline for us to wanting to kind of shift the paradigm in terms of misconceptions about L'Anse-à-L'Orme and about green space in general, in the way as we get older, it's funny when we're children, we spend so much time in nature, and as we get older, we spend less and less time in nature. And then, it's actually much more beneficial for us as we get older.

1020 I wanted to talk about how we value nature and in particular L'Anse-à-L'Orme. And then, talk about the housing project that is planned in a more general sense, who benefits from this, the

benefit to the developers and where the summary of benefits are. And in conclusion and no surprise here, my recommendation is that we need to save L'Anse-à-L'Orme.

1025 So, first of all, and I see this a lot on for sale signs on property, that vacant land is for
sale. And my thought is that there is such thing as vacant land. Land is always occupied, often for
a vast biodiversity that it has for flora and fauna, you heard from, I'm sure, lots of people about
threatened species and so on that reside in L'Anse-à-L'Orme and wild life... birds as well, that
need that land to survive. And so, my thesis is that there is no such thing as vacant land. This is
1030 land that is occupied right now by this vast biodiversity of flora and fauna.

 And it doesn't... it seems that in centuries past, as colonialists, French or English, came
to this country and just took it over like it belonged to us. And as we're realizing now, there was
another nation that was here ahead of us and they were occupying the land and treating it with
1035 great respect. And I think there is a similar analogy here with us just coming in and taking over
nature without a thought for what it does or where it goes or what happens to it. So I draw those
comparisons.

 I think there's another comparison and again it's development seems to be something
1040 that is considered progress and that land really doesn't have any value if it's not developed. And
what hasn't been done is to determine exactly what the value is, even in dollars, of what this land
provides to us in terms of cleaning the air, cleaning the water, mitigated heat islands for climate
change. And, in fact, what we've witnessed recently, which is if we didn't have these wetlands,
the flooding that we have experienced could quite possibly be a lot worse than it is. So that
1045 wetland actually absorbs a lot of water. You pave that over and you come in running into the kind
of problems that they saw in Toronto a couple of years ago because so many people paved over
their front yards so that they've got a place to park. Where did the water go? In the people's
basements. That is where it went. So that's a problem that we need to recognize moving forward.

1050 And I'm going to – my apologies about the comparison to Toronto – but I feel like
Montreal wants to be a world class city, Toronto wants to be a world class city, that we need

some kind of comparisons to understand where we sit versus where other cities sit in terms of value in the environment.

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If you go to the Toronto website – the Toronto City website – you'll see that they actually put a dollar value on the value of their urban forest. And they estimate that it's worth somewhere around 28 million of dollars in ecological services every year. And they have a record of every tree, and their entire forest. That represents about 10 million of dollars in just heating and cooling, 17 million dollars in terms of air quality. So they actually put a dollar value on that. I think that it would be really wise for Montreal to do the same, to recognize that these aren't just trees for somebody's esthetic benefit but there's a real value that trees and wetlands and so on provide to us.

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The other thing with wetlands and nature, and woodlands, is a mental health benefits. It's proven to lower heart rate and blood pressure, reduces stress hormones, hormone productions, it boost the immune system. The value to mental health is measurable. And in fact, I found an article from Japan where they call it «Forest bathing». They just simply walk in the forest and let it do its thing to improve their mental health and emotional health. I think, subjectively, we can all feel that when we go into these kinds of places, that they do make us feel better and less stressed.

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When each of us goes home from work, we will often go for a walk and observe what's going on, trees, birds, whatever. And I think we can't discount that feeling that that nature provides to us and in fact, I have a book called "Last child in the woods"... it's called "Saving our children from nature deficit disorder". You know, it would be a real shame if we continuously infringe on this nature that our future generations won't have the same kind of benefit.

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I remember as a child spending a lot of time in the woods, climbing trees, I was kind of a tomboy and making leaf forts and things like that. And that was my happy place, like toys didn't really matter to me. And I think we have to go back to that to some extent because kids are not getting that same benefit today.

1085 There is maybe some misconception that L'Anse-à-L'Orme is of a lesser value because
it's too small to provide but in fact, it's the last large natural space on the island of Montreal. So...
and I think the connection that it has to Cap St-Jacques, the Morgan Arboretum, Angell Woods
and so on, these all provide corridors for wild life. And, as you start to eat away at all these
different places, all of these places being defended by environmentalists such as myself, then
you start to get to a point where it's just... it isn't large enough to defend anymore. And it's... the
1090 wild life has to go somewhere else.

This is also a migratory bird route that is really important and I believe it's a
bobolink that is at risk and needs these meadows and fields for them to survive. And this is all
kind of tied together that L'Anse-à-L'Orme doesn't benefit anyone but in fact it benefits everyone.
1095 All of us who live on the West island, and probably beyond, because of the way it cleans our air
and it cleans our water and it helps us in mitigating temperature and so on. So, it's all kind of tied
together.

The other thing is, and here's another comparison, but Montreal has enough green
1100 space. But in fact, it doesn't. It only has 1.2 hectares of green space per 1,000 people and it has
an objective of achieving 2 hectares per 1,000 people, which still seems like a rather low goal
relative to places like Toronto and Ottawa, that have 3.2 hectares per 1,000 people and Ottawa
has 8 hectares per 1,000 people. Montreal also only has about 5% of green space that is
protected. Toronto has 12%. So when we want to be a world class city, we need to think in all its
1105 context and its terms.

I think what I've seen, observed at least is that there is a lot of great declarations made by
different levels of government about the need to protect this, and the need to protect that, and yes
we will defend our green spaces and so on and set targets such as this one, but when push
1110 comes to shove, it seems like you get down to the grass roots and they don't follow through on
their declarations. And that I think is a problem of the way things operate, for whatever reason.

1115 Another misconception, and again I'm drawing on some learnings from Ontario, is that anyone would love to live in a development such as the one that is being proposed. And in fact, there is a movement in Ontario around the green space that says people don't want a paved-over farmland. That is not where their dream home should be. So there needs to be a much wiser consideration for what all these other spaces should... you know what their function should be or their role should be.

1120 Clearly, good healthy farmland should remain good healthy farmland. The same with wetlands and woodlands and nature. There are places where buildings and developments could take place. But it doesn't have to be in areas where the function of that area is already well entrenched and well used.

1125 I am going to refer here to a housing study that was done, actually around the Greenbelt in GTA. But I'm posing the question that there has not been a business case to say that we actually even need this housing. And you might say well, we always need more housing. And that may be true but I think a proper assessment needs to take place and decisions made about where exactly that housing should happen. I know in Beaconsfield, we're trying to densify some of our areas that are becoming available that are less related to green space, so to speak. At the corner of St-Charles and Beaufort, there is some townhouses going up so it's higher density. We also obviously have to work within what people of Beaconsfield wanted to have. But that densification is taking place. There is a building, where the former tennis court, is going up a condo building.

1135 So, there are other areas to identify before we start building in the natural areas. And in fact, the province of Ontario was successful in defending their Greenbelt against developers who wanted to chip away at it and basically pave over farmland. So I think that there is a role for us to do the same kind of thing in Montreal. And to really look at what are our housing needs over the next five, ten, twenty years, based on our immigration rates and so on and so forth, and what are those housing needs and where is the best place to put that sort of thing.

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1145 Now, that study has not been done, to my understanding. And I remember a couple of years ago that we went through the whole PMAD process to try and understand what people wanted to have in terms of land use on the West Island and beyond. And we agreed that we should have development around transit, so, and yet this development that is proposed is not around transit. Transit would have to be developed after it was built, in essence. And so, I think I heard somebody talking about all the cars that it would bring in. You know, that's not productive. It's another sprawl kind of project.

1150 I was speaking about a study that could be done to assess what our needs are and where those needs need to be used. There is an organization called Neptus, it's non-partisan and it's a charitable foundation, and it researches and analyses and maps according to design and function of Canadian urban regions, and it's to improve policy and decision-making. And that's actually what was at the core of protecting the Greenbelt around the GTA. So there are organizations that can do that sort of thing. And that's where I think we should really do.

1160 Now, I have a bunch of maps here which are kind of an eye test. But basically, you know, as I said a minute or so ago, that the agreement coming out of the PMAD what that we were going to focus on transit-oriented development. And I put a circle here, which is kind of hard to see on the left side, which is the area in question for us. And as you can see, there is no transit there. I mean, I think that is fairly obvious to most people.

1165 So how we are at this position where we're looking at a development that is going to go in there, you know, it doesn't make sense. And even areas in the PMAD that have identified L'Anse-à-L'Orme as a conservation potential. But again, as I said, we say all the right things – the City says the right things, and the province and any other jurisdiction – but then, the follow through is what's lacking. And within a national urban park as well, it clearly falls into that area.

1170 So, who benefits from such a project? Well, the developers do, obviously.

1175 But has the municipality of Pierrefonds really assessed the cost of the infrastructure and services that will be required for this project? And will the taxes pay for all those things? I think there is always this belief that the municipalities can't wait to get the tax dollars because they're always looking for more money for infrastructure. But there will be a huge infrastructure required for something like this. And is the tax money that could be raised actually going to pay for that infrastructure, or you are basically back at square one again?

1180 There have been some cost estimates. I believe there was a professor from McGill who estimated that somewhere between 94 and 105 million dollars in infrastructure and equipment, and this doesn't even take into effect annual upkeep. So those are pretty sizeable numbers, you would want to know that you are going to generate enough taxes to pay for that. So, in essence, is there a business case for this, even from a ministerial point of view? Is the tax really going to cover what this is going to cost? - I don't know if I'm going over my time and my apologies.

1185 So the benefit to the developers is a very financial one obviously. But happens to everybody else? Is that everybody else on the West Island suffers and pays for this because of environmental degradation, essentially. There are very few for us spaces left on the island of Montreal – as I said this is the last large space that is available – and so, how democratic or respectful of the PMAD is this to develop and at the expense of basically everybody on the island of Montreal who actually benefit from them whether they realize it or not.

1190 In my summary, obviously the benefits to saving L'Anse-à-L'Orme far outway the benefits to developing it in terms of protection of habitat, clean water and air and environmental mitigation, climate change mitigation, the mental health benefits, the heat islands and the fact that we actually went through this whole process just a few years ago on the PMAD to try and assess where development should happen and this was not one of the places. So, it's kind of confusing to understand then how something like this, the PMAD could be circumvented. And developing L'Anse-à-L'Orme obviously makes the developers happy financially.

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1205 In conclusion, I just want to reiterate that I think it's a really strong case to save L'Anse-à-L'Orme and if nature protects, if she is protected, and I think we've seen serious evidence of that with the flooding that's gone on. Obviously, nature has not been protected and we cannot overcome the kinds of things that happened no matter how hard we try. So, I think we really need to shift our attitudes in the way we look at nature and how it's a value to us. Thank you.

LA PRÉSIDENTE :

1210 What would you make out of the 185 hectares that are proposed to be developed?

Mme YVONNE HIEMSTRA :

What would I make out of them?

1215 **LA PRÉSIDENTE :**

Yes.

Mme YVONNE HIEMSTRA :

1220 Nothing. Well, it should stay... it should stay protected. It should be protected.

LA PRÉSIDENTE :

1225 No park?

Mme YVONNE HIEMSTRA :

1230 No park.

LA PRÉSIDENTE :

As it is?

1235 **Mme YVONNE HIEMSTRA :**

It could... it might have, like walking pass potentially, depending on who takes on the jurisdiction of that. But it should have no housing development.

1240 **LA PRÉSIDENTE :**

Yes, this I understand. O.K. thank you.

M. JOSHUA WOLFE, commissaire:

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I think the only map that was not in your handout was a map of the proposed national urban park. I don't know if you're involved in the efforts to create such a thing? Can you tell us about or the current status? We've been told that there was a proposal when Mr. Mulcair was Minister of the environment, but since then, do discussions continue with the Quebec government?

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Mme YVONNE HIEMSTRA :

It's a great question. I can't answer that question. I saw this map on an environmental website, and I can't even tell you which one it was, and I thought O.K. where did this come from. And I actually reached out to try to find out, and I'm gathering that's where it came from. But I don't know any update on that.

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M. JOSHUA WOLFE, commissaire:

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That's fine. I think someone else will be speaking today and will be able to answer that.

Mme YVONNE HIEMSTRA :

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All right. O.K.

M. JOSHUA WOLFE, commissaire:

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And also, a similar question. You talked about migratory birds. This is the first time I think that anybody has used the word "migratory" and I just wondered: do you know about... so these are birds that, I understand that migratory birds don't nest there but they use it on their way...

Mme YVONNE HIEMSTRA :

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As a stopping off place.

M. JOSHUA WOLFE, commissaire:

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Right. Can you tell us anything more about that?

Mme YVONNE HIEMSTRA :

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Well, I believe that the bobolink uses it for nesting or stopping off. But there's also the McGill bird organization – I'm trying to remember the acronym, it's OBM or something like that – that tracks birds coming through every year, twice a year I believe, and they have identified that there are areas along that corridor that are stopping points for the birds.

M. JOSHUA WOLFE, commissaire:

1290 All right, thank you.

LA PRÉSIDENTE :

1295 Alors, merci beaucoup, Madame. J'inviterais maintenant monsieur David Fletcher, please. Good afternoon, welcome, bonjour.

M. DAVID FLETCHER :

1300 Thank you. I'll just start by saying my head is a buzz with some of the comments that I've heard here, that I was just itching to respond to. There's a lot of misconceptions and lot of things that really would need clarifying. But I'm going to start with what I prepared and if I have time, I'll perhaps deal with some of those things that I would like to comment too.

LA PRÉSIDENTE :

1305 Fine.

M. DAVID FLETCHER :

1310 First of all, what I would like to say is, you know, there has been an international process going on now since at least 1994, that has recognized that in a capitalist world, there's two kinds of capital, social and environmental capital, that have been sadly degraded through history, in fact, and out of that... out of an initial United Nation General Assembly Meeting, in 1983 I believe, there is a mandate set-up for a commission headed by Gro Harlem Brundtland and she set up the world commission on environment and development. Significantly, the word environment preceded the development in that particular document – and I think that's critical – that document
1315 and every document in the process since up until this very year in fact talks about the critical