

Projet de réseau électrique métropolitain de
transport collectif

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Sauvons l'Anse-a-l'Orme

Brief submitted to
Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement

regarding

Projet de réseau électrique métropolitain de transport collectif

Sauvons L'Anse-a-l'Orme(SLAL) is a citizens' based, community organization comprised of residents mainly from the Borough of Pierrefonds-Roxboro. It was founded in May 2015 to stop the massive, housing development of almost 6,000 units on the 185 hectares of natural green space in Pierrefonds West. Montreal Mayor Denis Coderre(along with Borough Mayors Jim Beis of Pierrefonds-Roxboro and Russell Copeman of NDG-Cote-des-Neiges) announced this Plan on June 26, 2015 at a Press Conference at Cap St. Jacques Regional Park. This green space, "en friche", is a huge part of the L'Anse-a-l'Orme Corridor (on the eastern side) which is a natural green-belt corridor that runs from Lake of Two Mountains south to Angell Woods while going through Ile Bizard, Pierrefonds, Senneville, St. Anne-de- Bellevue, Kirkland, and Beaconsfield.This land is the home and habitat for over two hundred and seventy (270) different species of birds, animals, and plants/vegetation including a herd of approximately sixty-five (65) deer. Some of these species are listed on Environment Canada Public Registry of Species at Risk (**see footnote #1**).

SAAL has received widespread support from local residents and citizens throughout the entire Communaute Metropolitain de Montreal. In addition, many local and international environmental groups, as well as members of the major political parties at various city and borough councils, have supported the need to protect this valuable, bio-diverse green space. This support is evident by our ongoing Petition which has been signed by over sixteen thousand (16,000) people.

SAAL, as an environmental group, recognizes the need for improved public transit. However this need should be fulfilled in a responsible, well thought out, and environmentally friendly manner. This current Project DOES NOT DO this!!

CRITICISMS OF

THE PROJECT

1) PUBLIC and interested Parties were not Consulted

The REM was conceived behind closed doors and did not consider other land use plans for urban development or other transport agencies. A good example of this is when someone such as former MNA Clifford Lincoln, who has lobbied for decades for a Train de l'Ouest, was totally surprised by this Plan.

2) URBAN SPRAWL

We are worried that the REM will increase Urban Sprawl by making new housing developments more attractive to potential clients who can buy a housing unit near a train station (a good marketing tool). The train station, at Kirkland, for example, will add additional pressure to develop l'Anse-a-l'Orme. New residents will have the option to drive to and park at the Station. We believe that, in no way, will the number of vehicles on the road decrease and in fact, the opposite will transpire as more housing units will mean more cars (at a conservative rate of two per housing unit). Local neighbourhoods that are located near these new stations will be over-run with traffic which will dramatically affect their quality of life. People from

Vaudreuil-Dorion, for example, which has been one of the fastest growing places in Canada, will be able to drive to these stations and take over these neighbourhoods!

According to the City of Montreal's Master Plan (PMAD), all future development should take place as Transit Oriented Development (ie. TOD). By definition, this means that all development should occur within a quarter mile or a five to seven minute walk to a transit hub (**see footnote #2**). Stations at Kirkland and St. Anne-de-Bellevue would not fit this definition. The development of Pierrefonds West is contrary to TOD.

3) INFLATIONARY IMPACT

It has been proven that the closer that one lives to a metro station or transit hub, the higher the property values and accompanying rents are (within 500 metres, 13%; 1,000 Metres, 5.8%; and 1,500 metres, 4.7% - **see footnote #3**). This would lead to higher property taxes and higher prices for most goods and services and a larger debt load (e.g. subsidization and funding of REM, and larger mortgages needed for inflated housing costs). This will lead to the displacement of people in middle and lower (fixed) incomes. There will also be some land expropriation involved to enable this project. In other words, these are all negative aspects! The Caisse becomes the Land Developer/Speculator that buys and sells like a private Corporation. Whose interest is this in?

4) GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Montreal has stated its desire to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 30% below 1990 levels by the year 2020 (**footnote #4**). The Caisse has estimated that once the REM is completed, there would be a reduction of 16,800 tons of GHG emissions annually. This figure comes from preliminary estimates based on a study by Steers Davies Gleave. This estimate does not take into consideration the occurrence of Urban Sprawl or the emissions caused by the construction of the REM itself. **The Caisse de Depot has refused to study this in more detail. Why?**

5) COST AND RISK

The Caisse de Depot is placing \$2.5 BILLION DOLLARS of our Pension Funds into this Project with the other \$3 BILLION DOLLARS coming from the Quebec and Ottawa (also Our Money). Is this acceptable and were we, the citizens, consulted regarding this spending? The role of the Caisse is to ensure adequate rates of return for our Pension Funds. How can this goal be achieved since usually, public transit projects that are normally paid for by the government, do not break even and lose money. Just look at the Metro System for an example where revenue from users never come close to covering costs! **How can the Caisse make an adequate return on our investment? They have stated that ridership costs (i.e. fares) will be competitive. Will fares have to be increased for all transit users in the metro region? How much will Capital Costs ever be recovered, let alone Operating Costs?**

6) CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Caisse appears to be in a conflict of interest position since it owns 30% of Bombardier's Train business (since Nov. 2015). How much favouritism will be shown in the awarding of contracts? Why is the Caisse in charge of this Public transit Project?

7) PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE (a Public/Private Partnership)

The train tunnel underneath Mount Royal and the Lake of Two Mountains train line will be appropriated by the Caisse. Is this in the Public Interest to do so? Why privatize these assets?

8) INCOMPLETE AND INADMISSABLE IMPACT STUDIES

This Project should be delayed due to the fact that six (6) Quebec Gov't. Ministries have stated that the Caisse's Impact Studies were inadmissible and/or incomplete. How can the Caisse not provide this information? Are they hiding something? What is the rush?

CONCLUSION

SAAL is thus opposed to this REM Project for all of the above-stated reasons. We reject this Project in its current state. We strongly believe, like the vast majority of Montrealers, that there should be a moratorium on the development of green spaces and that Montreal should place a reserve on unprotected land such as the 185 hectares at Anse-a-l'Orme. We are very concerned that this Project will lead to more loss of natural green space and thus, further environmental degradation. Since Montreal is hosting ICLEI in 2017 and is part of UN's Agenda 21, is Denis Coderre only providing lip service to the environmental cause or is he serious about taking care of the environment?

FOOTNOTES

#1.a) "Avian Species of the Kestrel Fields", Richard Gregson, June 2015.

b) David Suzuki Report on Pierrefonds West by Marie-Eve Roy and Jerome Dupras, 2016.

#2. National League of Cities Sustainable Cities Institute.

#3. La Presse, January 13, 2015.

#4. Global Warning Adaptation Plan for the Island of Montreal for 2015-2020, Montreal Gazette, Nov 24, 2015, Page A6