

Don Hobus

I thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion to the commission and to provide input that will hopefully influence the final version of the schema d'amenagement et de developpement de l'agglomeration de Montreal. I submit my comments and recommendations as a resident of Rosemere but also as a person committed to our environment and to the quality of life of our children and all future generations. I am a frequent participant at question period at Montreal City Hall and at various public meetings in Pierrefonds, Dorval, Cote-St-Luc, St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Beaconsfield, St-Bruno-de-Montarville, Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, and MRC Rousillon as well as closer to home in Rosemere and the MRC Therese de Blainville. The environment does not begin and end with our individual city limits. The decisions that we make locally, whether good or bad, may have an impact on the other side of the world. Think globally, act locally is a mantra for our times.

Before I begin my analysis of the schema and the particular points of interest to me I would like to make a general comment on the timeframe for the process that will lead to the adoption of recommendations on November 20, 2014. The original step in this process was the creation of the PMAD document during which more than 400 briefs were presented and analyzed. While there will certainly not be 400 briefs submitted for this current process it is certain that there is an unprecedented interest in this process and for good reason. The briefs are to be submitted by November 3, 2014 with three public hearings to follow where each group or individual will be invited to present their input, the last of which will be held on the evening of November 12, 2014. Following this last meeting the members of the commission will be expected to synthesize the briefs and meet together to make their recommendations for changes, the changes will then be incorporated in the document and presumably this last draft of the schema will be presented to council members for their input before a final, final draft is produced. The amount of work that is required for this process and the short delays given are beyond any logic. The cities and towns and MRC's are late in their process and delaying this deadline for one or two more months will only lead to greater confidence. Respecting the current delay will only lead to suspicion and a lack of respect for the process.

The modern environmental movement has been attributed to Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring" in which she brought attention to the pesticides that we were liberally applying and which resulted in the banning of the pesticide DDT, the same DDT that produced a Nobel prize for its inventor. Things are not always as they appear.

Dr Paul Ehrlich, professor in the department of Biological Sciences at Stanford University, wrote his book "The Population Bomb" in which he detailed the stresses placed on air, food, water and our entire environment as a result of an exploding world population. Years later (1988) the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was established by the United Nations with the purpose of producing reports on climate change. The early reports were mere warnings, almost symbolic in their nature, but as time has passed these reports have become more and more serious. In 2013 the New York Times reported on the latest IPCC report stating that with 95 to

100 percent certainty human activity is the cause of climate change. Climate change is one of two of the biggest threats that our children and all future generations will face.

The second threat is the loss of biological diversity and Montreal has a very special role and responsibility in mitigating this threat. In his book "Mal de Terre", Dr. Hubert Reeves quotes E.O. Wilson who states that we are losing biodiversity at a rate that may be as high as 10 percent every decade. The front page of Montreal's Le Devoir newspaper, 10 septembre 2014, stated "La moitié des espèces d'oiseaux sont menacées, sur 314 espèces en danger, 50 se retrouvent sur le territoire québécois". Montréal is a well known flyway for migratory birds. The population of honey bees is threatened and with it 95 to 100 of our food sources (fruits and vegetables) this should be a major concern. The brown nosed bat, our most efficient, natural pesticide, is on the edge of extinction. According to Bat Conservation International "Since its detection in New York in 2007, White Nosed Syndrome has been confirmed in 25 states and five Canadian Provinces. Winter bat colonies in some states have declined by more than 90 percent. " (<http://batcon.org/>).

As home to the CBD Montreal has a very special honour and with it comes a great responsibility to show leadership in the area of conservation and in meeting the targets and goals for the protection of biodiversity. "Our Common Future", alternately known as the Brundtland report set the target goal at 12 percent which has since been raised to a minimum of 17 percent. This goal is not a ceiling but instead is considered to be the minimum amount of space that we need to preserve if we are to survive as a planet. Montreal's goal has been set at 8 percent and in my opinion is irresponsible, completely immoral and is a betrayal of the trust of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.



The CBD did not seek out Montreal, Montreal lobbied to be the host city to the CBD and as such it has a moral obligation to respect the international goals (17 percent) for the protection of conservation and it is not good enough to transfer this goal and obligation off island.

On Sunday, November 2, 2014, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation filed a story on the latest climate change report that began "Climate change is happening, it's almost entirely man's fault and limiting its impacts may require reducing greenhouse gas emissions to zero this century". According to the Conference Board of Canada "Canada ranks 15th out of 17 countries for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions per capita and earns a "D" grade." And 30 percent of the greenhouse gas comes from the transportation sector. (<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/>). It is imperative that we reduce the number of cars on our highways and roads and increase the use of public transportation. A moratorium must be placed on new highway construction. It encourages urban sprawl and is a temporary improvement, at best, to highway congestion.

The very tragic events of Lac Megantic are fresh in the memories of all Quebecers and a very important omission is found in the draft Schema document in relation to this event. Following Lac Megantic the mayors of Montreal passed a unanimous resolution to respect the rail setback guidelines as defined by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. These guidelines make good sense and they should be included in the urban plans for all cities, even those without any rail lines, as a measure of solidarity with the people of Lac Megantic and as a demonstration that the safety and public security of its citizens is the highest priority of all mayors and councils without any exception. There should be no exceptions or mitigating circumstances at all.

Too often I have heard that a particular parcel of land cannot be protected or preserved because the land is owned by a private individual who has rights, or that the town needs the tax money or that we cannot afford to buy the land. These are excuses and some may be valid but they must be overcome and the provincial government must become involved to find a solution. The cities of Toronto and Ottawa have green belts; in the case of Toronto, 1.8 million acres of land, established in cooperation with the government of Ontario. According to a World Health Organization October 2011 study Montreal had more pollution than Toronto despite the fact that Toronto has a much larger population. Can this be explained by the Toronto green belt? According to a June 2014 study by the Toronto Dominion Bank economics department the trees in Toronto provided services in the form of air purification, cooling and water retention that could be valued annually at \$700 per tree or an additional \$ 7 billion to the local economy. Trees, forests and natural spaces make good business sense.

A second TD Bank report compares the three cities of Halifax, Montreal and Vancouver and shows that Montreal lags far behind; a further argument for protecting our remaining natural green spaces. "The greater Halifax, Montreal, and Vancouver areas together contain more than 100 million trees, worth an estimated \$51 billion (Halifax: \$11.5b; Montreal: \$4.5b; Vancouver: \$35b)."

Over the last several years Montreal has lost some important natural spaces due to the bureaucracy that exists in this province and our cities. I cite three examples; two on the island of Montreal and the third and most recent off-island. The area known as l'Anse-a-l'orme contained a large tract of land owned by Investissement Quebec and this land was put on the market for sale. Many groups including the Green Coalition Verte and the Sierra Club Quebec protested this decision by writing to the various political parties and requesting that this land be preserved. The response, where there was a response, was that the government could not afford to buy the land (one ministry to another). It is beyond any imagination that one must buy what one already owns. The result is that a developer now owns the land, bought for \$17 million. Is \$17 million that important to Quebec's annual budget?

The second example pertains to the last remaining land along the riviere des prairies, land that was owned by the city of Pierrefonds. It was a large parcel of land owned by a developer (the

land closest to the water and deemed undevelopable) and the remaining portion owned by the city. The land was subject to an exchange and when Montreal and Pierrefonds were questioned on the matter they both pointed fingers at each other.

The last example is found in the city of Lorraine, the domaine Garth, bordering the Mille Iles River. This land is a thick wooded area, home to hundreds of birds and it should have been included as part of the parc de la rivieres des mille iles but it is now in the hands of developer and is slated for a condo project. The land was owned by the city of Lorraine and was sold in 2014. If the island of Montreal cannot protect government land then why would we think that off-island communities will do better? This last example emphasizes the need for us to rethink how we finance our municipalities.

The following recommendations are required to be included in the Schema document and the government of Quebec for some of the recommendations must be petitioned for their intervention:

1. The target objective for protecting natural spaces must be raised from 8 percent to a minimum of 17 percent. This must be considered a moral obligation that the city of Montreal owes to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
2. The Green Coalition Verte being originator of the idea for Montreal's green belt (Parc Écologique de l'Archipel de Montréal (PPÉAM)) along with the partners of Le Mouvement Ceinture Verte must be consulted for the lands and natural spaces that should be included in any "green belt".
3. The government of Quebec must be lobbied immediately to stop the Highway 19 project slated to enlarge highway 19 from Laval to Bois-des-Filion and that the \$600 million for this project be reassigned for the acquisition of land necessary to Montreal's green belt.
4. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities guidelines for railway setbacks be included in the schema document with a special mention of the solidarity with the citizens of Lac Megantic and in respect of the victims who lost their lives in this tragedy. I would also invite the mayor of Lac Megantic to be present at the formal adoption of the schema, to honour her and to promise that Lac Megantic will never be forgotten.
5. To add to the existing document other green spaces that would include Meadowbrook, the entire natural spaces that remain in the l'Anse-a-l'Orme corridor (100 percent), a renaturalized Turcot Yards (100 percent), a renaturalized Notre Dame from Delormier to Viau, a promise never to allow the development of the golf course in the Anjou sector.
6. A commitment to reduce car traffic in the Montreal area by an improved public transportation and the reintroduction of tolls for single occupancy cars.
7. A renewed emphasis on public transportation with a tramway or light rail for the new Champlain bridge.
8. A light rail tram for the Doney Spur that will help alleviate traffic in the west island of Montreal