

Oral Presentation: Tabling of Written Brief by Les Amis de Meadowbrook on the Agglomeration of Montreal's "Policy On The Protection And Enhancement Of Natural Habitats" May 6, 2009

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Les Amis de Meadowbrook

In May 2008, at the Mayor's Conference "Local Action for Biodiversity", (Bonn, Germany, 26-28 May, 2008, P.15), Montreal Mayor Gérald Tremblay said: "To secure world future, we need respect towards all kinds of living creatures." The Montreal based UN Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity states: "Closing the gap and creating ecologically representative protected area systems..." is essential for our survival. **(CBD Technical Series 24: Closing The Gap; Creating ecologically representative protected area systems, A guide to conducting gap assessments of protected area systems for the Convention on Biological Diversity, Nigel Dudley & Jeffrey Parish, UNEP, [UN Environment Programme], Convention on Biological Diversity, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2006, P.9)**

"Currently, many countries have protected areas focused primarily on remote areas or particular ecosystems like deserts, mountains, etc. ..., where there is little human or commercial [activity, sic.] – leaving other ecosystems such as high seas, lowland forests, freshwater or temperate grasslands under protected." (**Op. cit.**, P.9)

Conservation, renaturalization and restoration must be comprehensive and not only centred on the easy and low hanging fruit. Meadowbrook fits the bill for preservation. What is Meadowbrook?

Meadowbrook covers 57 hectares, (141 acres), and straddles two jurisdictions:

-- 31 hectares in the City of Cote Saint-Luc

-- 26 hectares in the Borough of Lachine. (Formerly Ville St. Pierre)

The site was originally used as farmland prior to being purchased by the Canadian Pacific Railway for recreational purposes for its employees (circa 1917). It was transformed into an 18 hole golf course in the 1930's and remains in use as a public golf course, although now leased to a private operator. Over the years, the land's name has changed from Canadian Pacific Recreation Club to Wentworth Golf Club to the present name of Meadowbrook. It is in a rail yard. It is surrounded on three sides by tracks and is adjacent to heavy industry and the constant noise of Highway 20. Now... the greater Southwest of Montreal -- where Meadowbrook is -- representing 800,000 residents, (Lachine, Lasalle, Verdun, Southwest Borough, NDG/CDN, City of Cote Saint Luc, Town of Montreal West, Town of Hampstead, etc.), has the least natural protected areas in Quebec. As the "2007-2008 Working Document Report On The Policy On The Protection And Enhancement Of Natural Habitats", (April 2009, P.6), so aptly says: "Using urban development expertise to strike a balance between natural and built up environments with a view to creating living areas favourable to citizen well being..." presents a major challenge. This balance does not exist in the Southwest and must be struck. It is a question of equity and fairness.

There is no designated or publicly accessible natural space between Mount Royal/Summit Park, Terra Cotta, (Pointe Claire), Angrignon and the Back River, (Rivière des Prairies). The St. Jacques Escarpment Eco-territory is currently a no man's land and is regularly used as a dumping ground. Should the CN Railway and Highway 20 be moved up to its base, the soundscape would be deafening. It is imperative to reassess the Quebec Ministry of Transport's, (MTQ's), plans for the Turcot and consider

the St. Jacques Escarpment as an important element in a greater whole which includes the integration of Meadowbrook as a natural space.

The 57 ha, (140 acre), Meadowbrook, located in Cote Saint Luc and Lachine serves several roles:

- 1) It is a buffer and filter as it is situated between an industrial zone, railway yards and highways and sensitive residential neighbourhoods. It cleanses the area.
- 2) It is a green island in a sea of heat islands. It regulates the effects of excessive heat which can have a negative effect on human health.
- 3) It can serve as a key part in a Green Right Of Way network in the Southwest integrating the St. Jacques Escarpment, the future Glen Campus of the McGill University Hospital, the Douglas Hospital grounds, etc.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature/The World Conservation Union management Category #4 aptly describes Meadowbrook. It hosts the last surface running remnant of the historic Little Saint Pierre River/St. Pierre River System which Samuel de Champlain noted in his log. The site still has the original topography of rolling hills and valleys. This is exceedingly rare. Meadowbrook also contains vestiges of wooded areas and acts as a floodplain/catchment for waters especially during Vernal Equinox. The vernal pools serve as a resting stop for migratory birds.

Meadowbrook is more biologically diverse than a typical golf course:

Rare species as the Western, (Netleaf), Hackberry, Shagbark Hickory are found there. Bur Oak, American Elm are also present. The Hawthorn, Canada Elder, Highbush Cranberry, Bur Oak and Shagbark Hickory suggest the possibility of past Amerindian settlements. Forest plants such as the Sensitive Fern, Marginal Shield Fern, Spinulose Wood Fern, and Ostrich Fern are also found. Spring flowers such as the Lilly of the Valley, May-Apple, (Wild Mandrake), and the rare Canada Anemone have been inventoried. (Canada Anemone is endangered, or extirpated in many parts of North America, though it is more common in the US Midwest.) (www.ct-botanical-society.org/galleries/anemonecana.html - 6k - plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=ANCA8 - 90k) Milkweed provides habitat for Monarch Butterflies. Red Fox, Bullfrogs, Toads are also present. It is also a potential site for the Brown Snake. Last year a Deer was photographed on the premises.

- 4) The psychological benefits of greenspace should not be underestimated. According to a 2007 Royal Society study, (**The scaling of green space coverage in European cities**), (<http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=2390667>), an increase in biodiversity enhances human health. Cities are urged to scale development in accordance with greenspace coverage.

Humans are concentrated in cities ironically "...giving rise to concerns of isolation," and alienation and separation from nature. (See, Royal Study.)

Urban wide open tracts of “... public greenspaces form the arena of many people’s daily contact with nature and such contact has measurable physical and psychological benefits.” (**Op. cit.**) The study suggests that individuals perceive the species richness of a site and that the more biologically complex and diverse a site is, the better is the state of human health.

Allow me to sum up...

The Turcot Interchange reconstruction provides an ideal opportunity for the MTQ, (ministère des Transports), to exchange land with Groupe Pacific, the owner and developer of Meadowbrook, and to conserve, enhance and integrate the site with a more extensive St. Jacques Escarpment. In 2004, the OCPM, (l'Office de consultation publique de Montréal), had recommended Meadowbrook and the Little Saint Pierre River be declared an eco-territory. This is an essential first step for the formation of a committee composed of all interested parties to set out the terms of negotiation. The owner will benefit with a developable tract of land. Turcot, a brownfield, would be revived. One Planet Living and L'OEUF, (L'Office de l'eclectisme urbain et fonctionnel), would get the opportunity to showcase a premier green and Transit Oriented Developed Community featuring a Tram-Train following the former Montreal & Lachine Railway alignment to Old Lachine and beyond. The Southwest would gain and avail itself of a reforested Meadowbrook, a revitalized St. Jacques Escarpment and an additional greenspace, (50% of the developable land), in the new Turcot development.

Thank you.

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