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L'Anse-à-l'Orme : a rare treasure that any intelligent city would cherish and protect.

Wilderness, wetlands, farmland as old as the Island of Montreal, these are the natural counterparts of the city's built heritage. Since long before this island was inhabited by anyone, first nations included, L'Anse-à-L'Orme has been a natural habitat for animals and birds, plants and trees, many of which are already threatened and endangered. Why would the City of Montreal not recognize the irreplaceable value of this last major undeveloped natural space on the Island?

The proposition—destroying 185 hectares to build 5,500 homes—is an inexplicable equation. Developing this unspoiled area has everything to lose: biodiversity, green space adjacent to the dense city, natural history. And nothing to gain that cannot readily be found elsewhere, more easily, in many alternate sites on the west island or more central areas.

Why skimp on green space on the Island of Montreal when ample development space remains? The City's stated goal of protecting 10 percent of the island is always at risk, open to interpretation. The assets that wilderness and green space actually represent are viewed by this administration as sacrifices grudgingly made. Too late, the City, with more far-sighted minds in office, would see the long term benefit of protecting what can never be recovered. Short term thinking that serves development undermines all that is great about the City of Montreal—natural and built.

The City recognized early the enduring value of open space. Think of the three summits of Mount Royal that are central to the geography of the City and to the life and leisure of everyone who lives and visits here. Think of the great parks—Lafontaine, Outremont, Angrignon, Westmount, among others. Wise minds understood the merit of setting aside the land, and investing in the care of these essential spaces. We cannot imagine our neighbourhoods and cities without them. Yet none of these designed green spaces has the rarity that is L'Anse-à-L'Orme: nature itself, unspoiled.

L'Anse-à-L'Orme is not there for the taking. It is there for the keeping.

Let its preservation be among the legacies of Mayor Coderre and Russell Copeman.

Lucy Fellowes