



**Tabling of Les Amis de Meadowbrook Brief on the BAPE Hearings on the Turcot
Reconstruction Project,**

Presentation compiled by Avrom David Shtern

Contact: Jo Ann Goldwater, President

Les Amis de Meadowbrook

Member group of the Green Coalition and

Green Right of Way Movement

www.lesamisdemeadowbrook.org

514-484-8668

Les Amis de Meadowbrook

514-484-8668

savemeadow@yahoo.ca

www.lesamisdemeadowbrook.org

**Tabling of Les Amis de Meadowbrook Brief on the BAPE Hearings on the Turcot
Reconstruction Project, June 15, 2009**

Presentation compiled by Avrom David Shtern

Contact: Jo Ann Goldwater, President

Les Amis de Meadowbrook

Member group of the Green Coalition and

Green Right of Way Movement

www.lesamisdemeadowbrook.org

514-484-8668

Les Amis de Meadowbrook, a grassroots group of concerned citizens has fought for the preservation of Meadowbrook for the last 20 years.

What is Meadowbrook?

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

-- 31 hectares in the City of Côte 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. The operator uses very little synthetic pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers.

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, (Borough of Lachine, Borough of Lasalle, Borough of Verdun, Southwest Borough, Borough of Côte-des-Neiges—Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, City of Côte Saint Luc, Town of Montreal West, Town of Hampstead, etc.), has the least natural protected areas in Quebec.

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 Saint Jacques Escarpment Natural Space.

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:

« Les groupes et citoyens ont soulevé des interrogations sur l'un ou l'autre des écoterritoires ou sur des secteurs particuliers à couvrir par la politique. On demande notamment que le golf Meadowbrook, le ruisseau Petit-Saint-Pierre qui serpente à travers le golf ainsi que toutes les îles entourant l'île de Montréal soient aussi considérés comme des écoterritoires. Elle partage également le souci des organismes voués à la défense du boisé Angell et considère l'urgence d'agir dans ce dossier. »

« Par ailleurs, pour diminuer la pression qui s'exerce actuellement sur certains secteurs visés par la politique, la commission reconnaît la nécessité d'imposer un moratoire sur tout projet immobilier dans les milieux naturels des écoterritoires et dans les zones tampons. » (Jean-François Viau Président de l'Office de consultation publique de Montréal, COMMUNIQUÉ DE PRESSE POUR DIFFUSION IMMÉDIATE, **POLITIQUE DE PROTECTION ET DE MISE EN VALEUR DES MILIEUX NATURELS LA COMMISSION DE L'OFFICE DE CONSULTATION PUBLIQUE DE MONTRÉAL CONSTATE UNE ADHÉSION GÉNÉRALE DE LA PART DES PARTICIPANTS**, Montréal, le 11 juin 2004, <http://www2.ville.montreal.qc.ca/ocpm/pdf/communiqués/2004/com20040611.pdf>)

On May 27, 2009, the Island of Montreal's Commission permanente du conseil d'agglomération sur les grands équipements et les activités d'intérêt d'agglomération voted on its recommendations regarding the **BILAN DE LA POLITIQUE DE PROTECTION ET DE MISE EN VALEUR DES MILIEUX NATURELS**. The Montreal Agglomeration Council will table these recommendations June 18, 2009. (Please see attached document.)

Three recommendations are vital:

1. Create scenarios to protect Meadowbrook as a nature park, regional park or ecoterritory integrated with the Saint Jacques Escarpment.
2. Create a network of linear parks unifying larger parks and natural spaces called trames vertes. One of these four green right of ways would be centred in the Greater Southwest and would include Meadowbrook and the Falaise Saint-Jacques.
3. Protect the integrity of the Saint Jacques Escarpment within the framework of the Turcot Complex's redesign.

Commission permanente du conseil d'agglomération sur les grands équipements et les activités d'intérêt d'agglomération Recommendations :

Recommandation-3

« Que des mandats soient donnés à la Direction des grands parcs et de la nature en ville

- de mener des démarches visant la création d'un réseau avec quatre grandes trames vertes sur le territoire, dans l'Est, l'Ouest, le grand Sud-Ouest et le Centre et le Nord de l'île de Montréal;
- de développer des scénarios visant la protection du site du golf de Meadowbrook et sa transformation en parc nature, en grand parc urbain ou en écoterritoire dans la perspective d'une trame verte reliant ce site à la falaise Saint-Jacques. »

Recommandation-6

« Qu'un mandat soit donné aux services municipaux appropriés de faire des représentations et de poser des gestes conséquents pour que les enjeux liés à la protection de l'écoterritoire de la falaise Saint-Jacques soient considérés dans le cadre de la reconstruction du complexe Turcot. »

These are essential first steps for the formation of a committee composed of all interested parties to set out the terms of negotiation. The committee would be composed of representatives from the City of Montreal, the Borough of Lachine, the Southwest Borough, the City of Côte Saint-Luc, the Town of Montreal West and the land owners. The owner of Meadowbrook will benefit with a developable tract of land in the former railway yard. Turcot, a brownfield, would be revived. One Planet Living and L'OEUF, (L'Office de l'eclectisme urbain et fonctionnel), the designers of the yet to be disclosed Meadowbrook project 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.

Les Amis de Meadowbrook endorses the plan set forth by and deposited today by Patrick Asch of Heritage Laurentien to refashion the Turcot as a «...modèle mondial pour le verdissement et la diversité biologique du grand Sud-Ouest. » (Patrick Asch, in **Montréal at the Crossroads: Superhighways, The Turcot And The Environment**, Black Rose Books, 2009, Ch. 4, P.71.)

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. The integration of Meadowbrook and the Saint Jacques Escarpment as a nature preserve fits the bill.

As the Montreal Agglomeration's "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, (Montreal/Westmount), 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. This contrasts sharply to what it was like over a century ago when NDG Farmers Decarie, Benny and others cultivated the famed **Montreal Melon** and other produce and livestock. They would raft up the Saint Pierre River from their Old Montreal homes and would climb the wilds of the Saint Jacques Escarpment to what was called Upper Lachine.

Setbacks and Soundscape:

Should the CN Railway and Highway 20 be moved up to the Falaise's base, the soundscape would be deafening. The MTQ's Turcot sound study sets the noise around 55-65 dB, (decibels), at the foot of the Escarpment. ([Partie 3](#) (4214 Ko)

Annexe F : Cartes Nos 11 à 15 – Impacts sonores (DJM E- 2016)

http://www.bape.gouv.qc.ca/sections/mandats/Complexe_Turcot/documents/PR3.2/PR3.2_annexeC_partie3.pdfv)

Hazardous effects of non-occupational noise are well documented: « Sounds louder than 80 decibels are considered potentially hazardous. The **noise chart** below gives an idea of average decibel levels for everyday sounds around you. » (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association website, www.asha.org/public/hearing/disorders/noise.htm)

Painful

150 dB = rock music peak

140 dB = firearms, air raid siren, jet engine

130 dB = jackhammer

120 dB = jet plane take-off, amplified rock music at 4-6 ft., car stereo, band practice

Extremely Loud

110 dB = rock music, model airplane

106 dB = timpani and bass drum rolls

100 dB = snowmobile, chain saw, pneumatic drill

90 dB = lawnmower, shop tools, truck traffic, subway

Very Loud

80 dB = alarm clock, busy street

70 dB = busy traffic, vacuum cleaner

60 dB = conversation, dishwasher

Moderate

50 dB = moderate rainfall

40 dB = quiet room

Faint

30 dB = whisper, quiet library

(Op. cit., American Speech-Language-Hearing Association website,
www.asha.org/public/hearing/disorders/noise.htm)

« Noise not only affects hearing. It affects other parts of the body and body systems. It is now known that noise:

- Increases blood pressure
- Has negative cardiovascular effects such as changing the way the heart beats
- Increases breathing rate
- Disturbs digestion
- Can cause an upset stomach or ulcer
- Can negatively impact a developing fetus, perhaps contributing to premature birth
- Makes it difficult to sleep, even after the noise stops
- Intensifies the effects of factors like drugs, alcohol, aging and carbon monoxide »

(Ibid. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association website,
www.asha.org/public/hearing/disorders/noise.htm)

If **road and highway traffic** are rated as **80dB**, by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and **freight trains** are rated between **70-90 dB**, (See, **Railroad Freight Yard District (RFY) Article XX Railroad Freight Yard District (RFY), Revised 09/27/07, Charter Township of Orion Zoning Ordinance 78 Page 20 – 1, Michigan, http://www.orion.lib.mi.us/township/ordinances/zo78/Section_20.pdf**), it is imperative to re-examine the the authenticity of the lower figures, (55-65 dB), that are cited by the MTQ. (See, MTQ, Turcot, ([Partie 3](#) (4214 Ko) **Annexe F : Cartes Nos 11 à 15 – Impacts sonores** (DJM E- 2016).)

Even lesser noise is potentially deleterious to long term human health: « Night-time noise from aircraft or traffic can increase a person's blood pressure even if it does not wake them, according to a new study published in the **European Heart Journal**. »

(Alexandros S. Haralabidis, Konstantina Dimakopoulou, Federica Vigna-Taglianti, Matteo Giampaolo, Alessandro Borgini, Marie-Louise Dudley, Göran Pershagen, Gösta Bluhm⁶, Danny Houthuijs, Wolfgang Babisch, Manolis Velonakis, Klea Katsouyanni, Lars Jarup for the HYENA Consortium' “**Acute effects of night-time noise exposure on blood pressure in populations living near airports**”, **European Heart Journal Advance Access published online on February 12, 2008**, European Heart Journal, doi:10.1093/eurheartj/ehn013, <http://eurheartj.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/ehn013v1?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=jarup&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>):

« The researchers found that volunteers' blood pressure increased noticeably after they experienced a 'noise event' – a noise louder than **35 decibels** – such as aircraft travelling overhead, traffic passing outside, or a partner snoring. This effect could be seen even if the volunteer remained asleep and so was not consciously disturbed. » (**Op. cit.**)

Birds also make the Escarpment their home. However, studies indicate that noise may effect their sexual reproduction:

- « Some of our city birds may be changing their tunes in more ways than one. Studies in the mid-1990s in the Netherlands revealed decreased songbird densities near roadways and that traffic noise appears to be largely responsible. In short, some bird species are unable to adjust to living and breeding in areas with a lot of human-generated (anthropogenic) noise. However, some species are actually making changes in some aspects of their vocalizations to compensate for the excess noise from our lawn mowers, airplanes, industry, and - most of all - vehicle traffic. »

(Dr. David Bird, “Noise Pollution and Bird Song”, **Bird Watcher's Digest**, [The effects of noise pollution on birds. As seen in **Bird Watcher's Digest** magazine.]

www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/conservation/pollution.aspx - 43k – http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/conservation/noise_pollution.aspx ./ See also, Sara Goudarzi, “Animals: Noise Pollution Threatens Birds”, **LiveScience**, website, posted: 01 November 2006 03:26 pm ET, http://www.livescience.com/animals/061101_ovenbird_noise.html, [“**Loud ambient noise affects the sex lives of birds, a new study suggests.**”])

A 15-20 meter setback between the railway/highway corridor and the Saint Jacques escarpment is therefore insufficient for the health of humans or flora and fauna. In a letter addressed to Avrom Shtern, MLIS, Membre du Conseil d'administration, Coalition verte, from Anne Pelletier, ing., M.Sc., Directrice adjointe, Bureau de projet du complexe Turcot, 23 septembre 2008, **OBJET: Commentaires transmis et intérêt porté au projet**, Projet de reconstruction du complexe Turcot, Nombre de dossier : A-2-01-01, Pages 1-2, [T:\Turcot GID\TURCOT – LA VÉRENDRYE\SDP\0011-A-encad proj\A2-01-com rel pub gen\A2-01-01-gen\Réponse Coalition Verte.doc], (see attached letter), the possibility of a wider setback is explored :

« Une piste multifonctionnelle est prévue au pied de la falaise St-Jacques. **Si la navette aéroportuaire ne s'implante pas dans la cour Turcot, l'espace réservé pour la navette serait utilisé comme une zone verte tampon** entre les rail et la piste multifonctionnelle. »

« Par rapport au concept présenté l'an dernier, **les voies rapides et ferroviaires ont été déplacées de 20 mètres vers le sud afin de réduire les impacts sur la faune et la flore de la falaise St-Jacques.** Dans cet espace, nous prévoyons favoriser l'implantation de milieu favorable aux espèces indigènes (faune et flore). »

« Soulignons en passant que la chaleur et la qualité de l'air ne sont pas les seuls facteurs qui affectent la santé publique. Par exemple, **une réduction de la capacité de réseau autoroutier et le transfert de circulation ailleurs dans le réseau urbain auraient pour effet d'augmenter les accidents impliquant les piétons et les cyclistes.** » (Anne Pelletier, ing., M.Sc., Directrice adjointe, MTQ, Bureau de projet du complexe Turcot)

Railway proximity issues have come to the fore in the past decade. As previously stated, a setback of 15-20 meters between the Falaise and the railway/highway right-of-way is not enough to mitigate noise. **The minimum setbacks standards for a main railway line as set out by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities/Railway Association of Canada is 30 meters.** (See, **REPORT Research Phase 3: Proximity Guidelines and Best Practices**, NOVEMBER 2006, PREPARED BY: Earth Tech Canada Inc., 105 Commerce Valley Dr. W., 7th Floor, Markham, Ontario, L3T 7W3, PREPARED FOR: **RAC/FCM PROXIMITY GUIDELINES RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT, Final Report, Proximity Guidelines and Best Practices**, Reprinted August 2007, Prepared for The Railway Association of Canada and The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, http://www.proximityissues.ca/english/MaterialsContent/2007_Guidelines_eng.pdf.)

(See Also:

Stronger Ties: A SHARED COMMITMENT TO RAILWAY SAFETY; Review of the Railway Safety Act, November, 2007, CHAPTER 7, **PROXIMITY ISSUES; CHAPTER 8, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND RESPONSE, Review of the Railway Safety Act**, Published by Railway Safety Act, Review Secretariat, Ottawa, Canada, K1A 0N5. This report is available at: www.tc.gc.ca/tcss/RSA_Review-Examen_LSF , Funding for this publication was provided by Transport Canada. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department. ISBN 978-0-662-05408-5, Catalogue No. T33-16/2008, © Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, represented by the Minister of Transport, 2007, **Stronger Ties: A Shared Commitment to Railway Safety - Report of the Advisory Panel** [PDF version 1.59 MB], http://www.tc.gc.ca/tcss/RSA_Review-Examen_LSF/pdf/TRANSPORT_Stronger_Ties_Report_FINAL_e.pdf.)

The Federal Railway Safety Act Recommendations were tabled in the House of Commons in 2008 and are currently being studied. **Recommendation 34** states that « ...the Railway Safety Act should be amended to require the developer and municipalities to engage in a process of consultation with railway companies prior to any decision respecting land use that may affect railway safety. »

(Stronger Ties: A Shared Commitment To Railway Safety, CH.7, P. 107.)

Recommendation 40, in Chapter 8 is also pertinent:

« **Railway companies should file annual environmental management plans and regular compliance audits with Transport Canada. These plans should address, among other issues, pollution of railway property (i.e., yards and railway rights-of-way).** » (Op. cit., P. 150) (Canadian Transportation Agency website:

http://www.cta-otc.gc.ca/rail-ferro/bruit-noise/consultation/a_e.html.)

Unfortunately these recommendation/guidelines are not codified in Quebec, although they are mentioned in a general way by the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal, (CMM). (See, CMM, **Projet de schéma d'aménagement**, 2005, http://www.cmm.qc.ca/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/PSMAD.pdf . The schéma contains specific recommendations on railway yards, (P.126), and proximity to highways and railways, (P.127).) **Witness June 5, 2009 and the CP Rail derailment in Oshawa, Ontario where rail cars went into backyards almost hitting immovable structures...**

(See, [Oshawa evacuated after CP train derails](#) ,

Natalie Alcoba, “Train derails near Oshawa, Ont., school during recess: Chemicals among the freight”, **Canwest News Service**, June 6, 2009, <http://www.montrealgazette.com/news/Oshawa+evacuated+after+train+derails/1667411/story.html> , [« Durham Police evacuated a one-kilometre radius around the crash, including several nearby schools. »]

[Global News raw video of derailment in Oshawa Ont.](#)
<http://www.montrealgazette.com/news/Global+News+video+derailment+Oshawa/1667411/story.html?tab=VID> .)

The soundscape and vibration/noise characteristics cover at least 1000 meters from the rail line... (**Op. cit., RAC/FCM PROXIMITY GUIDELINES RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT, Final Report, Proximity Guidelines and Best Practices**, Reprinted August 2007.) Given that this project will be a combined railway/highway corridor the noise/sound will be deafening in the area of the Falaise... Railway and highway safety must also be taken into account given the tight setbacks.

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) Like the Saint Jacques Escarpment it is a buffer and filter. It is situated between an industrial zone, railway yards and highways and sensitive residential neighbourhoods. It cleanses the area.
- 2) Like the Saint Jacques Escarpment, 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](http://www.ct-botanical-society.org/galleries/anemonecana.html) - 6k –
[/plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=ANCA8](http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=ANCA8) - 90k)

Milkweed provides habitat for Monarch Butterflies. Red Fox, Bullfrogs, Toads are also present. Similar to the Saint Jacques Escarpment, 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...

A genuinely green project would ensure the ecological integrity of the Falaise by creating a greater buffer than currently envisioned. The Turcot Interchange reconstruction also provides an ideal opportunity for the MTQ, (ministère des Transports), to exchange land with Groupe Pacific, the owner and developer of Meadowbrook to build a Transit Oriented Development on the vacant Turcot Yard, and to conserve, enhance and integrate the site with a more extensive and ecologically sound St. Jacques Escarpment.

Thank you.

Avrom David Shtern
Les Amis de Meadowbrook
www.lesamisdemeadowbrook.org
June 15, 2009
