

## **Let developer pay for basin: residents**

By Irene Chwalkowski, The Suburban

Several Pierrefonds/Roxboro citizens are angry that taxpayers are picking up the tab for a \$2.6 million retention basin in the Heritage-sur-le-Lac residential development in western Pierrefonds.

They say not only should the 20,000 sq. ft. basin be paid by the developer, who knew that the land was part of a marshland, but the area should never have been a site of development in the first place.

“We’re doing it to protect the environment... It’s not being paid for only by the taxpayers of Pierrefonds, but by the agglomeration. It’s a plus for us,” said borough mayor Monique Worth.

“We have no business paying for the cost of [the developer’s] lake that will allow him to build his houses on his property that he knew full well was floodplain when he bought it,” said Pierrefonds resident Susan Kiepprien.

“If the city of Montreal is paying for this, that is all of us. Will he lower the price of the sale of the houses? Normally the [drainage system] is included in the sales price.”

Borough councillor Bert Ward told The Suburban last month the retention basin will be a catch basin for the water run-off that will collect there because of the existing natural marshland.

“It will save the city \$1.5 million because there will be only one pipe that will drain into the Rivière des Prairies instead of 15. The rest of the water will drain into the regular water system,” he said.

Anne-Marie Parent, former Beaconsfield councillor and architect specializing in sustainable development housing, said retention basins act like natural ponds and are an alternative to traditional drainage methods where streams were obliterated by concrete and runoff created by rainfall was directed by underground pipes into rivers.

“The retention basin is part of the surface drainage of a pattern for a municipality. It’s a better way of respecting the environment by letting water seep down into the soil. It’s more acceptable for sustainable development. Some municipalities include them in their taxes. In other municipalities, the cost [is borne by] the developer and the cost of lots includes the payback,” Parent said.

Environmentalist David Fletcher said the term retention basin is too cosmetic.

“Call it for what it is — it’s a community sump,” he said.

“‘Retention basin’ is too cosmetic, too clean. It’s a hole like you have in your basement where crappy water collects. It’s where they used to punish devils in the Middle ages,” he said.

Fletcher said taxpayers always pay for unnatural alternatives to natural spaces.

“It shouldn’t even be there in the first place,” he said.

Environmentalists are concerned the development is encroaching on marshland that is home to the bobolink — a migratory North American bird whose existence is threatened.

The project developer Construction Voyer could not be reached by press time.

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