

## Now it's eco, now it's not

The Chronicle, by Raffy Boudjikianian Article online since September 5th 2008,

Even as a chunk of the Bertrand Stream ecoterritory located in Pierrefonds/Roxboro borough is to be stripped of its ecological status to be sold to an unnamed company, the Montreal agglomeration council and borough mayor Monique Worth said the land in question was not really of any ecological value.

"Nobody was using that territory before," Worth told The Chronicle. "There is a promoter that started this kind of very small industrial park near Pitfield Boulevard (where part of the eco-territory in question lies)," she said.

The small strip of land is adjacent to Pitfield Boulevard and Thimens Road near Highway 13 off Gouin in Pierrefonds/Roxboro, a close distance to some of the entrances to Bois-de-Liesse regional park.

"(The aggro council) decided that the land in question has no ecological value whatsoever even though it's in an ecoterritory," said Montreal spokesperson Darren Becker.

It remains unclear exactly which company has asked for the land from Montreal, as the entity is not named in an agglomeration council document appended to the council's Aug. 25 meeting minutes that refers to the transaction.

The document states the terrain in question is a strip of land covering 139,670 square feet. A part of the land already belongs to the company, but it is divided into two by a narrow band of 9.14 metres' width which belongs to Montreal and is part of the Bertrand Stream ecoterritory. "The band allows access to a snow deposit area (...) belonging to the City of Montreal," the document reads.

It also adds removal of the lane should allow the company to "raise the market value" of its property.

Thus the lower portion of the land would be totally owned by the company, and the higher portion would remain part of Montreal, but no longer part of the ecoterritory.

Bertrand Stream is one of 10 lands on the island that were given ecoterritory status by the City of Montreal in 2004. "It was kind of in a wider perspective," Becker explained, that Montreal at the time drew the borders for each. "We knew these were pretty large swaths of land," he added.

According to Becker, Montreal knowingly made some of the ecoterritory borders spill beyond lands of actual ecological value. "It's a work in progress," he said.

Though city officials are stating the move should not have any effect on the environment, local environmental activist Sylvia Oljemark, a member of the Green Coalition group, remained sceptical given what she called Montreal's failure to protect these territories in the past.

"Bit by bit, we're tearing away at these so-called ecoterritories," said Oljemark. "That area has some ecological value," she insisted, "and it needs monitoring for the health of the Bertrand."

Though Bertrand Stream itself does not stretch to the area in question, Oljemark said there is a feeder stream nearby that falls into it.

"There is a little stream there that you see in the spring," Worth said, but she insisted the land was of no ecological value. She said the negotiation process took a long time, since the land is right on the border of Pierrefonds/Roxboro and the borough of St. Laurent.

She added the process had to be vetted by the provincial environment ministry.

Environment Quebec did not return phone calls for comment as of press time. Nobody interviewed could name the company involved in the deal.

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