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| |  | | --- | | The following appeared as part of a petition sent to residents of Youngtown by an environmental protection group:  “The Smith Corporation should not be permitted to develop the land that is now part of the Youngtown Wildlife Preserve. This sanctuary is essential to the survival of the 300 bird species that live in our area. Although only a small percentage of the land will be sold to Smith, the proposed development will have disastrous consequences for our area. The company plans to build a small hotel on the land. Although they have promised to ensure the preservation of the sanctuary, there is no way that their plans will do anything but harm the sanctuary. There are no circumstances under which this sale will benefit our community, which relies on tourists who visit primarily to see our magnificent bird population.”  Write a response in which you examine the stated and/or unstated assumptions of the argument. Be sure to explain how the argument depends on these assumptions and what the implications are if the assumptions prove unwarranted. | |

Biodiversity is important to maintain rich ecosystems, and environmental protection groups aim to protect this and protest against efforts that cause environmental deterioration. The argument made in their petition specifies that development on a small percentage of the land would have disastrous consequences for the area, claiming that the community has no benefit in the project, harming the economy of the community, which relies on tourists who visit for the rich bird populations. But the logic of the argument is fallacious, and can, in some aspects, be easily weakened from the information given in this petition.

First, a major assumption made by the eco-protection group is that the Smith Corporation will not ensure preservation of the sanctuary, and that their plans have not taken into account the area that would be developed. Evidence for this must be clearly provided for a better argument, for it may be possible that the Smith Corporation is notorious for ignoring biodiversity when executing construction projects. In that case, the petition's argument may even be strengthened. Their reasoning that 'there is no way' that the plans will not harm the sanctuary relies on the assumption that they have ruminated on all the possible directions the project may go, and that not a single one is conducive to the preservation of the region's ecosystem.

Second, an interesting point brought up in the petition is that the community greatly depends on tourists who visit to observe the 300 bird species that reside in the Youngtown Wildlife Preserve. They claim that, on this premise, the construction of a small hotel in the area would harm the sanctuary and the community. While the project's potential harmful effects on the sanctuary are based on the line of reasoning established in the previous paragraph, the harmful effects it may have on the community's economy is something to think about. Would the construction of a small hotel not increase the number of tourists who arrive? After all, it provides them a place to stay very close to the very tourist attractions that they travelled across hundreds of miles for. Thus, the hotel could have a positive effect on the local economy, and could perhaps even be built in a sustainable way, that does not leave the sanctuary littered.

Finally, while we have detailed the ways in which the petition's argument fails, we must not fully discount the demands of the petitioners. Their criticism for the project comes not from a place of hatred, but from a love for nature. (This is a reasonable assumption to make.) The Smith Corporation could even request suggestions from the environmental protection group, and have some of their representatives on the team. Such groups care for the integrity of different biodiversity hotspots, and could make specific requests to the Corporation so that the plans do not accidentally intrude in the lives of the bird populations. Such measures, and many others, could be taken. The argument made assumes that these measures are impossible, and fails to consider any possibility of cooperation with the Corporation. Hence, the group's demands must be taken into account, although the argument made by them in this respect is wrong; assuming that there is no other way is the incorrect conclusion, based on their premise and line of reasoning.

Thus, the petition makes multiple stated and unstated assumptions, but the argument made on these premises is weak and requires further substantiation. If the assumptions made by the group prove unwarranted, as discussed, then the argument falls apart. Their argument should be improved with meticulous efforts to prove each claim, and cement their lines of reasoning towards their conclusions/demands.