An informed objection to the development of Montreal's wetlands and other regional nature.

Body:

The health of the environment, that of the economy and that of citizens are inseperably intertwined; for instance, access to nature significantly improves the physical and mental health of humans.

1 to 3 km proximity to green spaces decreases mortality rates and improves the general populace's percieved health. Higher levels of biodiversity also has a positive relationship with greater human health. Natural spaces are the allies of the lower and middle classes; Health inequality due to income inequality is lowest among populations exposed to the greenest environments. Since there is a large body of studies which would indicate that the ongoing degradation of the local biodiversity and natural environments deprives us of mental and physical health assets, a responsible government should consider whether or not what they are replacing those assets with can provide mental and physical health benefits in return. Doing something to the detriment of mortality and mental and physical health is indeed a moral issue.

However, local nature is also part of any local community's sense of identity, and a sense of identity in turn is what can bring together and foster a healthy community. This is something which cannot be replaced on a social level.

It is also economically pressing to prevent more damage from being done from a land value perspective. The traditional hallmarks of industrialization are also the major sources of pollution in the world; mining, construction, agriculture, and other industries dispense toxic or radioactive wastes which ultimately flow into the soil, groundwater, atmosphere, and living bodies. This is a known cause of human disease and can render the land infertile and unsuitable for life. The longer contamination is allowed to leach into natural systems from their initial site (ex.: a construction site), the larger stretch of land loses value. They acquire the ‘zone of limited residence’ status, meaning that agricultural production become forbidden, in which case the plot’s value drops to zero and its cost equals the cost of rehabilitation, unless it finds alternative use. A 2015 study consistent with past value drop data calculates that once the public becomes aware of contamination, land prices decline between $126,580 and $139,680 USD.

Meanwhile, the worldwide loss of arable (fertile) land is an increasingly pressing issue; billions of kilograms of toxic wastes are dispensed into the air, water and soil annually in Canada alone. These pollutants have been found to accumulate in the bodies of Canadians of every age group and cause a populationwide increase in birth defects, disease, death, and cancer among

other detrimental health consequences. Despite a growing world population, 24 billion tons of fertile soil are lost per year, with some soil types becoming extinct due to human activity. Vast stretches of land lose their vegetation, in turn allowing soil erosion to take place, which spreads the pollution even further. The preservation of fertile land is the solution to its own problems; plants naturally filter out pollutants from the soil and the air, an ability which is recieving increasing praise, attention and use in the growing phytoremediation industry.

As such, it is my belief that for the sake of Canada's sustainable economic future as well as the health of its citizens, governments must protect their green spaces, especially natural ones; they must enforce sustainable industry practices; they must also fund land restoration technologies and offer incentives to adopt them, as well as create a system to streamline their evaluation and progression to field tests so as to hasten implementation at degradation hotspots; they must also think to design public city spaces so that the benefits of natural settings within 3 km are provided to citizens regardless of their socioeconomic class.

For this reason, I am sending this message to plead for Montreal and Quebec to consider halting the development of our wetland environments.

Laura Leclerc

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