

MONTÉRÉGIE CONNECTION PROJECT

What would life in the Montérégie region be like? ...Under the TOO MUCH IS NOT ENOUGH Scenario

Georges Charbonneau's Fall

A Story by Kess Vaderheson

On October 6th 2040 George decides to bring his wife, Nicole, and grandchildren on a visit to the orchard located on Chemin de la Montagne in Mont-Saint-Hilaire, where he often went with his family as a child. Unfortunately, this outing which used to guarantee delicious Cortland apples and maple syrup crêpes does not take place; there are so many cars on the road during the weekend that Georges turns back home and decides they will have to come back another time.



About twenty year ago, along side many others, Georges and Nicole left the expensive city of Montreal to return to their native area of the beautiful Vallée-du-Richelieu. Over the years, this region transformed from a peaceful agricultural area where cows contemplated cars scarcely passing by on the Chemin des Patriotes to a suburb with condos and bungalows aligned for kilometers on end. Now, going from Beloeil to Sorel in the morning traffic takes two times longer than in the good old



days. Many people started working in the Contrecoeur sector since the port was extended and big boats deliver merchandise to this area. In 2035, a new bridge was installed on the Richelieu to meet the needs of the growing population generating all this traffic. People also use the new highway, the Pomme d'or Highway.

There seems to be insufficient space to greet all the new immigrants arriving to the region. The houses have extended all the way into the golf courses and the forests of Otterburn Park, Saint-Charles and Carignan have almost all disappeared. Municipality mayors talked a lot about instating densification of housing, but spacious single-family houses continue to occupy the riverbank. Along roadsides and close to transit areas new multiple-story buildings were build in order to house the population which has grown a great deal over the last twenty years.

The Saint-Hilaire mountain still stands strong, but its paths are crowded by thousands of visitors in search of nature, fresh air and peace. New restaurants and businesses start emerging all over to take advantage of this touristic influx. Locals generally make their purchases in the large surfaces along the highways. Green spaces and orchards are disappearing at an alarming rate. Cows and fields become increasingly rare; only soya and corn crops persist in the North of the region, where agriculture has intensified. There are still a



few producers that offer fruits and vegetables to visitors keen on purchasing local, organic products. With the development of agrotourism, some farmers even offer visitors a place to stay on their farm, which is a good way to make sure their businesses can stay afloat.

Living in his charming old house surrounded by a garden and large trees on a quiet street in Beloeil, Goerges considers himself lucky. His children, Julie and Simon would love to have a similar living arrangement; they are hoping to buy a bungalow in one of the recently developed residential areas. They both love urban agriculture, so they are also hoping to have a large backyard where they could have a garden, fruit trees and even chickens. Thankfully, due to the new industries that were installed on the old agricultural fields of McMasterville and St-Mathias it is not a problem to find high paying work in the region, which should allow them to meet their personal aspirations.

When Goeroges Charbonneau, a grey-haired and proud grandfather, asks his wife Nicole what she thinks of the Vallée-du-Richelieu in 2040 as compared to in 2015, she admits that although the new Vallée has many new commodities she is not happy to see the landscapes losing their green charm. She even knows several people that are planning on selling their homes and leaving the Vallée because they find that the quality of life that first attracted them there no longer exists.

