

MONTÉRÉGIE CONNECTION PROJECT

What would life in the Montérégie region be like? ... Under the A WASTELAND LIFE Scenario

Under a grey sky

A Story by Kess Vaderheson

Since 2018, times were hard in Quebec. Worldwide, there was an economic crisis, but on a smaller scale the crisis also hit the Vallée-du-Richelieu quite strongly. For the past ten years the population had been aging and employment insurance offered nothing more than closed doors to people who wanted to work. A number of businesses had shut down or had to let go of half of their employees.



Kitchen cupboards were less full than in the past, children only wore used clothing and old folks were more fragile than ever. Times were hard. Thankfully, in spite of this, solidarity reigned amongst the people. There were many volunteer action centers and their doors were always open, their employees smiling and their shelves filled with free essentials. In Beloeil, Claudette Fortier and her colleagues from the other cities of the Vallée greet all visitors with gently with patience and empathy.



To offer housing at a reasonable price the cities were converting single-family homes into townhomes. A number of recreational services were offered for free to adults and children. Cars were rare as most people opted for the use of active transportation because it cost them less and was better for their health. Patience and resourcefulness were at the forefront of most people's lives, especially young folks.

Thankfully, people had abundant access to nature for free. In the city, the rows of trees continued to absorb pollution and offer fresh summer shade. The mountain in the heart of the Vallée was welcoming and provided peace and fresh air. The few remaining forests of the region also continued to provide shade, shelter and habitat for wildlife, as well as, firewood for heating. The river continued to run through the entire Vallée, providing a current of freshness.



Unfortunately, climate change was causing environmental shifts which allowed invasive species to make it from the south into more northern regions like the Vallée. Because of the diversity of trees and plants in the large forests of the region they were able to resist climatic changes reasonably well. Maple plantations on the other hand were being heavily invaded by the Asian

long horned beetle, and in a matter of years the rich plantations of the Vallée were all destroyed. Cultivators were forced to go on employment insurance and their old plantations were empty. Over time, birch, poplar, willows and alders started emerging on these old plantations and thankfully, these trees were able to provide wood for heating and construction.

Agricultural practices of the good old days had disappeared. Aging of the population, the price of seeds and a lack of implicated youth were leading to the downfall of agriculture in the region. Grocery stores now only sold imported products.

Thankfully, people could still raise beef and milk cattle because hay was available for a good price and fields were available for summer grazing. Certain people also started canning again and producing artisanal products to make a little additional income on the side. And so, rare bursts of hope like these helped keep people going through these difficult years. Thankfully, the Claudettes of the volunteer action centers kept their smiles and offered essential items for free to poor people of all ages. The big hearts of the people continued beating and thanks to the solidarity between people and their resourcefulness there was hope that one day the sky would turn blue again.

