

Signs of green, signs of hope for the future

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Another provincial election has come and gone and a new political landscape has emerged.

If votes are any indication of the changing concerns of the population, I would say that the West Island landscape is changing both culturally and physically. For the first time in history, the Parti Vert received 11.11 per cent of the vote in the Jacques-Cartier riding, an area that corresponds roughly to Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Baie d'Urfe, Beaconsfield and Pointe Claire.

This means more than one in every 10 people in those communities were voting for a party that puts the environment first as a political priority. In other West Island ridings the Parti Vert's support never dipped below seven per cent.

This represents a change in people's thinking and values. I adore this area and I have always felt there was great potential here for a green West Island, with sustainable energy-efficient communities that value their ecological heritage by preserving it and minimizing the activities that negatively affect it.

A couple of weeks ago, it was announced that the borough of Pierrefonds-Roxboro will receive the West Island's first Eco-quartier, a centre that will offer environmental awareness and outreach services for residents and work to improve the quality of life for all. The managing organization for the Eco-quartier will be SOS Planete, founded by West Islanders Veronique Vendette and Valerie Sabbagh.

The city of Beaconsfield is holding its first West Island Environment Fair at Beaconsfield High School on Earth Day, April 22.

The fair will feature a special lecture by somebody who has had the privilege of viewing Earth from a different vantage point than anyone else I know - astronaut Marc Garneau. On the same day, a group of children under the banner of SAVE will have an Earth Day parade through the streets of Ste. Anne de Bellevue.

Appropriately, the children will receive an escort from Ste. Anne's public security patrol car, a hybrid gas-electric.

In the business world, Hagen, a pet-product manufacturer, has chosen to build a green building to house its international corporate headquarters in the Baie d'Urfe industrial park.

It will be the first privately owned building in Quebec to receive a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver certification. The building is heated and cooled by a series of geothermal wells, and uses motion-sensitive lighting that adjusts intensity to ambient light levels. Computer models have estimated that the building generates an energy savings of 65 per cent.

Finally, when the new Macdonald Campus library was being built recently, it was because of the efforts of the student organization MSP (Mac Sustainable Project) that it included 15,000 square feet of non-polluting eco-carpeting, Forest Stewardship Council-certified wood furniture, low-flow toilets and a number of other sustainable features.

The group has also produced a 73-page ecosystem sustainability assessment that details how Macdonald Campus can be more sustainable. What's interesting is that students are taking the lead and are no longer content to wait for faculty and staff to set the example.

Perhaps these are the first few signs that my green dream for the West Island might at last be coming true.

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