

When I taught at John Abbott College -I retired five years ago - one of the highlights of the semester was when I invited a photographer who came to my class to share his photographs of the wild life in the L'Ance-`a- L'Orme area and its surroundings. The students were always amazed and delighted to see what wonders lay so close to their own backyards. The presentation made them aware of the richness of nature that surrounded them that they had been previously unaware of.

I think my students are in many ways typical of a change that has taken place in Quebec. People want to be out in nature whether it is to hike, to cycle or simply to stroll along with their children or elderly parents. Just how true this is was brought home to me when we had a couple of sunny weekends a few days back. Mount Royal was so packed it was hard to walk. The following day when I was down in Parc Jean-Drapeau, it seemed almost as crowded. I am sure this was also true of Montreal's other parks although I certainly did not visit them all.

Clearly, the hunger to get out in nature and enjoy the many benefits it offers is increasing. However, natural and green spaces continue to dwindle as witness the decision to cut down a 1,000 trees in order to build a concrete stadium on Parc Jean-Drapeau. And, for Montrealers there is less and less green space off island as well and what with traffic congestion what green space there is getting harder and harder to get to.

The proposal to develop part of the L'Ance-`a-L'Orme corridor, a wonderful natural area with deer and turtles and over 100 species of birds, is simply one more proposal to keep eating away at what little natural space remains. When will it stop? When Montreal becomes a parking lot.

People want to be able to go out and enjoy the wonders of nature without having to drive 100 kilometers to do so, if they even have a car. Because L'Ance-`a-L'Orme is still undeveloped, we have a unique opportunity to preserve this wonderful area so that we can all enjoy it by turning the entire 365 hectares into a park. That would be a memorable way to celebrate Montreal's 375 anniversary.

The citizens of tomorrow will look back with gratitude at the foresight that I hope you will show by not allowing this development to go ahead and recommending instead that it become a park so that our citizens will have an opportunity in the future to enjoy the rich biodiversity that was the fortune of our ancestors in the past.

Deirdre King