



Do Montrealers really
want another aquarium?

Description

The public is more sensitized to the needs of species held captive in man-made facilities

By **Georges Dupras**

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Do you ever get the feeling that our civic leaders have lost touch with the people? Have our elected representatives been so blinded by the smoke and mirror presentations offered by some developers that their environmental responsibilities are allocated to those mastered in creative writing?

The authors of **Royalmount** have turned a deaf ear to the many who see the downside of this mega project. Situated in the Town of Mount Royal, south of the Montreal borough of Saint-Laurent, and bordered by the Metropolitan and Décarie expressways, this labyrinth will not only increase congestion and pollution but will almost certainly signal the death of the **Rockland Centre** and badly impact the **Marché Central**. As if this throwback to a rapidly changing retail world wasn't enough, we are now told that the promoters are planning something equally antiquated – I'm referring to the inclusion of an aquarium.

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Over the past decades, aquariums around the world have been closing, and those still open are facing increasing difficulties in sustaining ticket sales and attracting advertisers. The general public has become more sensitized to the needs of those species held captive in man-made facilities. Small whales in these aquariums have perished due to work-to-rule issues, and sharks have been dispatched by means of a mallet. Today, marine research has shown that fish recognize boundaries and suffer in the same manner as cetaceans and whales when caught.

The **Carbonleo** group argues that this project will encourage a greener way of life for all but fails to say how.

The fact remains that the true threats to marine ecosystems are overfishing and pollution. Incarcerating sentient beings in unnatural surroundings while they slowly succumb to aberrant behavioural patterns will do nothing to reverse present trends.

I encourage readers to write to the [Carbonleo](#) group and ask them to re-think their plans for an aquarium or any kind of animal display.

'Incarcerating sentient beings in unnatural surroundings while they slowly succumb to aberrant behavioural patterns will do nothing to reverse present trends [threats to marine ecosystems].'

Is this aquarium merely another flavour of the day, no different than the ill-conceived Portuguese bullfighting of a few years back or rodeos here in Montreal? Are we simply replacing the plight of carriage horses on the streets of Montreal, giving another reason for people to wonder just whom our elected officials represent?

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Georges R. Dupras has advocated for animals for over fifty years. A member of the International Association for Bear Research and Management (IBA), a Director of the Animal Alliance of Canada (AAC), Quebec Representative of Zoocheck Canada and past Board member of the Canadian SPCA, he worked on the original Save the Seal campaign in 1966 that culminated in the founding of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) in 1969. Georges Dupras has published two books, *Values in Conflict* and the eBook *Ethics, a Human Condition*, and currently lives in Montreal, Canada.

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