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When everything makes you sick

By Marie LeBlanc on October 24, 2015

Posted in Education, Environment, Health & Safety, Politics, Science & Technology



Is your environment making you sick?

Canada's marathon election campaign is finally over. Looking back over the past two-and-a-half months, I am perplexed at the lack of focus on issues surrounding the environmental impact of man-made products on humans, and the human impact on the environment.

Many people are getting sick from their environment, while birds and other animals are facing extinction. Yet, most candidates running for office haven't demonstrated any knowledge regarding the issues surrounding environmental illness and multiple chemical sensitivities, and how these impact people's quality of life.

On Jan. 15, 2015, the world took a significant step towards recognizing the severity and extent of these issues. Organized by the Association for Environmental and Chronic Exposure Injury (A.M.I.C.A.), an international resolution was drafted.

It's called, "Conclusions of the International Congress 'The Rome Resolution' – Consensus on Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS): therapies and prevention strategies", and it was signed in Rome by medical professionals from around the world, including Dr. Tara Sampalli, PhD, Assistant Director of Research, Manager Primary Health Care in Nova Scotia.

[The Rome Resolution](#) addresses issues of housing as well as other challenges people with multiple chemical

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PHOTO OF THE DAY



On the bandwagon: a sign of the times at a local donut shop. No word yet on official bagels or perogies. PHOTO by Greg Petzold

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RIVER CITY 360

sensitivity face.

Many of the topics included in the [Rome Resolution](#) are issues I have approached various levels of government and agencies with; only to find dead ends, a run of red tape and plenty of skepticism.

There are an increasing number of people suffering from multi-system environment-related illness which affects every organ of the body and results in a lower quality of life.

The Nova Scotia Environmental Health Centre in Fall River, near Halifax, is the main place in Canada where research is being done to help diagnose Multiple Chemical Sensitivity. They use an integrated system encompassing the person as a whole, unlike the health care system here in Manitoba and elsewhere across the country.



“There are many issues for people with environmental illness and housing is one of the significant ones; it’s difficult to find safe affordable clean housing,” says Dr. Carol Scurfield, a Winnipeg doctor.

“As well there’s other issues; issues related to transportation, the need to be able to acquire food and the things that they need in a safe environment where they are not going to react. So that’s an issue that needs to be addressed,” she adds.

Dr. Scurfield realizes it is very complicated to diagnose and treat this kind of illness, however, she says it does need to be addressed as she often sees the challenges people face when dealing with this kind of pathology.

All aspects of life are affected when people suffer from chemical sensitivities. Though a person may look normal and do what they can to survive, they pay the price during and after encountering a situation that affects them adversely.

Because it is invisible, people do not see this, and they often think and say, “You are fine,” thereby dismissing the validity or the seriousness of the illness.

Funny enough (well not so funny) the Chimney Swift bird is facing extinction in the Wolseley area of Winnipeg, where a mock chimney was built to help bring the bird back. Yet, what about the humans who are canaries in the coal mine?

Both instances show how environmental factors are affecting them. While we may be seeing the demise of the Chimney Swift species, in some cases it is the beginning of the end for the people who are facing illness related to their sensitivity to chemicals and other factors in the environment.



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By Joan Suzuki on April 5, 2016

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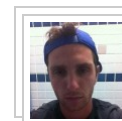
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Are people with sensitivity to chemicals in the environment the proverbial canaries in a coal mine?
Perhaps, they similar to the endangered Chimney Swift. PHOTO: Marie LeBlanc

[The Rome Resolution](#) not only outlines issues faced by people with environmental illness, it also offers up some ideas for remedial action.

As Canadians elect a new government, I suggest asking all candidates, from all parties, who are successful in their bid to become MPs, how they will help those with environmental illness/multiple chemical sensitivity who are struggling to find proper housing, medical care, work, homecare, transportation and government services to accommodate their illness.

It is time to bring in housing that is safe and without chemicals, have hospitals that are fragrance free, a place for the elderly and those who suffer with allergies and environmental illness/multiple chemical sensitivity, a space they can be together yet live in single dwelling units where there is a community and less isolation, have an area with sustainable living practices where they are not cast off to the boon docks just because the government does not want to deal with the issue.

Why not stop this illness from increasing by taking some of these measures now? We are a product of our environment. It is time to save ourselves; our children and the future of our children's children.

[Check out this provocative New York Times Sunday Review photo essay by Thilde Jensen entitled, "Canaries".](#)

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About Marie LeBlanc

Marie is an artist, poet, photographer, with a background in alternative health and Bachelor of Arts in Human Geography and Sociology (Advanced Major). She advocates and has been active in many committees to create awareness for people with various disabilities. She was awarded the Mental Health Volunteer Hero of the year in 2012 and has helped coordinate mental health walks. Marie believes creative expression through art and entertainment is healing for your body,mind and soul. She is extremely inventive, creative and resourceful.Other Interests include the environment, culture and just about anything due to her curious nature. She enjoys and has learned a lot through her experience writing and taking pictures for the community news commons.

2 responses to "When everything makes you sick"



Perry Nikolychuk November 25, 2015 at 9:01 pm | [Permalink](#)

Are you in a chemical free environment????



Perry Nikolychuk October 24, 2015 at 8:53 am | [Permalink](#)

That's a very interesting article! I hope they come up with affordable chemical free housing real soon!!
The chimney swift got theirs!

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