



L'ASSOCIATION JAMAÏCAINE DE MONTREAL INC.

JAMAICA ASSOCIATION OF MONTREAL INC.

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Service du greffe

Commission de la sécurité publique

Division du soutien aux commissions, aux conseil consultatifs et au Bureau de la présidence du conseil

155 rue Notre-Dame Est

Montréal, Québec

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Dear Commissioners,

The board and members of the Jamaica Association of Montreal welcome the opportunity to offer our opinion on the virtual public consultation on street checks held September 1st, as well as to comment and make recommendations on the SPVM policy on street checks itself.

The Jamaica Association of Montreal is an incorporated community organization that has been in existence since the independence of our island country, Jamaica. For the past 58 years, this organization has been a beacon and a representative voice of Jamaicans and by extension many in the Black community in this city. Over these many years, various representatives have also had their voices heard on issues of police brutality and racist aggressivity towards Black people. It would appear that in voicing our opinion today, that there has not been much change in the view of Black people by the police, those who have taken an oath to protect all citizens equally. There have been countless reports detailing the fact that Black and visible minority communities have been systematically targeted by abuse and unfair police tactics that in many cases have left disrespect and lack of trust towards the police service and its members by a large percentage of minority communities. It would also mean that for generations, Black people and racialized communities have been impacted by the police and their view of us in this city. It is time for change, we are tired of being targets of rage and abuse, of police lies or wrongly filed reports. It is also fitting to gauge that the police service would want members of all communities to respect them, and the services offered. I would further state that not only white communities should feel safe and protected, but all of Quebec's communities.

The independent report released by university researchers surrounding police street checks last August 2019, where Armony *et al* further point to the fact that whatever actions that may have been taken in the past to bridge gaps between racialized communities and the police have been superficial at best. That report shows unconscionable rates of street checks for Indigenous (11%), Black (4.5%) and Muslim (2%) citizens for no probable or verifiable cause. The policy response by the SPVM and Quebec to the Indigenous, Black and Muslim communities has been anemic at best and further galvanizes the idea within these communities that systemic racism and conscious bias are the order of the day. The report seems to be yet another attempt to placate the masses and to show, in some form, that something is being done to solve the matter. From a purely superficial stance, the report is a precursor to a first step but it is nothing that will assuage the matter of bias, racism and brutality towards these communities. Black communities and other racialized groups are asking for concrete, measurable and actionable steps that point to the real issues that cause systemic racism, conscious and unconscious bias, and attack the problem head on so that for another 58 years Montrealers and Quebecers are not grappling with the same issues that have honestly plagued this city since its inception.

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Our opinion with respect to the public consultation meeting held on September 1:

- 1- While the police service is seemingly open to discuss matters of race and policing, the SPVM and other Quebec police forces are still have not yet ready to accept the fact that there are officers and representatives on the force that hold racist views;
- 2- They are not open to even putting in place actionable and measureable consequences for officers to enforce a zero tolerance approach to racism on the force;
- 3- The representative for the police force had a very hard time admitting that racial profiling and systemic racism exists within the force – he spoke only in broad terms, in fact dismissing the idea;
- 4- He had a very hard time admitting that there were racist officers;
- 5- In our view, admitting that there is a problem and naming it is the first step in addressing the matter head on and from our view, it was exceedingly clear that there was reticence on this front;
- 6- Futhermore, that representative left the door open for all those police officers, who hold negative views of non-white people, to further take advantage of a system that has checks imbedded in the system to protect them, their actions and views.

Our recommendations on the police street check policy:

A number of community organizations has submitted their views on the policy and have made points on what need to also be addressed, we would like to go further in suggesting the following recommendations on the matter and the street check policy to make it more robust:

- 1- The issue of “driving while Black” must be part and parcel of the police street check plan. It is unconscionable to think that the factors that include checking the documents of the occupants and functionality of the vehicle preclude racist approaches by police officers as there is a high rate of Black people being stopped by police officers for non sense matters;
- 2- The collection of race base data is a must for police and not ethnocentric data. The importance is because this is how racialized people are viewed irrespective of the stance the Premier Legault and Quebec City states that there are no races;
- 3- There should be an internal approach at police schools and forces to continually check for systemic racism, conscious and unconscious bias in their current officers and recruits. Beliefs play a large role in how others are viewed. Understanding how police officers view others is important for they are given authority to police and that might include the use of aggression, shooting or killing. We strongly believe that this is a situation, where far too many cops have skirted justice and have gotten away with irreparable damage to lives and murder. A continual checking for systemic racism, conscious and unconscious bias is a must to help curb police street checks and to better their beliefs of others;
- 4- There should be more of an external approach with community organization, sports clubs, and the community at large to engage in free and open dialogue, collaboration, communication and access to each other. As it stands today, polices officers seemingly approach communities in which they feel comfortable while negating those that make them uncomfortable. We had experienced this with two police stations in the Cote des Neiges burrough and we noted that the

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chiefs of those stations were from different racial groups. We noted that the one that identified most with a racialized community was present and open to discuss with us more readily.

- 5- Officers must be held accountable for their actions towards community members and groups, it is not good enough to put them on administrative leave for many are impacted by their actions.
- 6- There must be a further awakening, admission, acceptance and action, not only on the police force, but also the judicial system, that includes, lawyer, judges, clerks, public servants, and all those associated with the profession, that governs public security to also take responsibility for ensuring that the rights of all citizens are protected under the laws that govern this province and the laws that govern this country.

I trust that members of the Commission will hear these heartfelt words and recognize the severity of the matter ; furthermore, to take concrete and truly actionable steps to improve the view of minority communities and their lives in this city and province. That action would prove honourable and point to the fact that it can be done. Racism and systemic racism must be eliminated from our daily lives, it is an invisible cancer that is destroying our very beings and our societies on a daily basis.

Montreal can do better and should do better.

Regards,

Mark Henry
President