

May 6, 2021

**Commission sur les finances et l'administration**

Division du soutien aux commissions

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**PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATION**  
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We are Open Door Books/Livre Accès Montréal, a volunteer run collective operating out of QPIRG Concordia. We work to connect prisoners across Canada with resources and free reading materials, primarily by collecting and distributing books to prison libraries. In response to the City of Montreal's invitation for pre-budget public consultation, we submit this memorandum regarding the budget of the Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM). We recommend that the SPVM budget be cut by 50%, and the money reinvested in initiatives to promote the safety and wellbeing of Montreal's communities.

Despite 60% of respondents in last August's pre-budget consultation expressing that they supported defunding the SPVM, the proposed budget included a \$14.6 million increase in force's operating budget and a \$6 million increase in their infrastructure budget. Given the results of the consultation, as well as many years of cuts to other municipal services, we find this to be concerning. The SPVM's budget needs to be significantly reduced, not increased.

The SPVM's has a long history of racial and social profiling and police brutality. Since 2000 SPVM officers have killed 40 people, and others have died in police custody. Some of the victims include Anthony Griffin (1987), Preslie Leslie (1990), Osmond Fletcher (1991), Marcellus François (1991), Trevor Kelly (1993), Anas Bennis (2004), Fredy Villanueva (2008), Mario Hamel (2011), Patrick Limoges (2011), Alain Magloire (2013), René Gallant (2015), Jean-Pierre Bony (2016), Pierre Coriolan (2017), Nicholas Gibbs (2018) and Sheffield Matthews (2020). Those killed by the SPVM have disproportionately been Black, Indigenous and people of colour ("BIPOC").

This racial profiling is compounded by what has been termed "social profiling", in which police excessively patrol marginalized neighbourhoods and ticket people for small offenses related to "disorder" or "incivility". The damaging, disproportionate and ineffective results of this practice is evident in the findings of the *Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse*'s report "The Judicialization of the Homeless in Montréal: A Case of Social Profiling",

which found that homeless Montrealers were given 30% of all tickets, despite representing 1% of the population.

The effects of the SPVM's racial profiling and inadequate community-based resources have been very apparent throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the institution of a police-enforced curfew, Raphael Andre, a 51-year-old Innu man froze to death in a portable toilet just steps from a shelter that was not allowed to house him. More recently, the SPVM was documented targeting people of colour spending time in Jeanne Mance Park for the apparent violation of social distancing rules. Another video from the park at around the same time showed SPVM officers brutalizing another person and placing him in a chokehold.

Mayor Plante has publicly stated that she supports body cameras for all police officers. This ignores the fact that studies, such as one conducted in 2015 in Washington D.C., have shown that body cameras do not reduce police violence and are a very expensive program with little to no efficacy. The money allocated for body cams would be better spent in investments in Montreal's most marginalized communities. To fund them runs contrary to evidence, and can be used to justify further police budget increases.

There are a number of steps that could be taken to reduce the police budget. We support the recommendations of the Defund Coalition, which has put forth a cohesive and detailed plan to reduce the budget by 50%. Most of the current budget is allocated to employee salaries. We recommend that the city examine cutting personnel, as has been done in numerous other municipal sectors. The SPVM is grossly overstaffed, with the highest number of police officers per capita, and 36% more officers per capita than the 10 largest cities in the country. At the very least, a hiring freeze should be instituted. We emphasize that the money divested from the SPVM should be reinvested in other areas.

Strategies to reduce policing that we recommend include the elimination of police work related to drugs, sex work, HIV status and incivilities. Drug and mental illness related work should be handled by a community response team operating with a harm-reduction based approach. Police should no longer be responsible for the supervision of worksites, act as crossing guards or be present in Montreal schools. Resources should be invested in homelessness-centred resources such as washroom facilities, income-gated permanent housing, drop-in centres and increased shelter space. Access to social services should be improved with a focus on BIPOC and LGBT communities. Increased funding for free public transit, parks and green spaces without anti-homeless architecture, water testing for lead pollution in daycares and public fountains, libraries and recreation centres and extrajudicial dispute resolution systems that do not criminalize those involved would all have far more positive effects on the wellbeing and safety of Montrealers than the expansion of a police force.