

Current ISSUES

for Montréal
women



*Conseil des
Montréalaises*

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PREAMBLE

In previous work, the *Conseil des Montréalaises* (hereafter called CM, see Appendix A) has developed significant expertise regarding the situation of Montréal women in areas such as poverty, housing, transportation, recreation and culture. The CM now wishes to share its **comprehensive vision of a city that would truly be egalitarian and inclusive, articulating the issues seen as priorities for women of Montréal**. These issues are interrelated and must be addressed in an integrated way. This is why, to face the challenge of equality, the CM supports the need for decompartmentalized municipal action, both on sectorial and geographical plans.

The CM's vision is centered on the notion of **sustainable development**, which is becoming one of the principal frameworks in all areas of municipal action. Beyond environmental concerns, sustainable development requires taking into account social equity and intergenerational solidarity in the context of a new vision of economic and urban development. In that perspective, the CM wants to ensure that **the concerns of women of Montréal, as well as the objective of equality in all areas** will be taken into account.

The fight against poverty is another important issue for the CM. Through our work, we demonstrate how socio-economic circumstances impact the whole spectrum

of women's living conditions. In this sense, **to consider women in all their diversity** is a constant concern of the CM, which wishes to emphasize that all women of Montréal are not affected in the same way by the difficulties of economic and social integration. By developing **an intersectional approach**¹, the CM seeks to analyse the various forms of discrimination that affect immigrant women, women from visible minorities, aboriginal women, women with disabilities, and to show the additional challenges that such women face.

It is with these goals in sight, and as an advisory body on matters of equality between women and men in Montréal that the CM has written *À l'heure des enjeux municipaux pour les Montréalaises (Current issues for Montréal women in 2013)*. **This document is intended for all stakeholders in municipal life**: elected officials and city management, women's groups and community-based organizations in general, as well as all citizens, both men and women, of Montréal. The format is meant to be concise and reader-friendly so that **everyone can comprehend the issues it develops and presents**. It seeks to highlight the challenges that remain on the subject of equality between women and men in Montréal and invites various stakeholders to consider the proposed courses of action to achieve the goal of true equality.

¹ The intersectional approach consists of taking into account “the mechanisms articulating different logics of domination that operate from social constructs such as gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, etc., and mutually reinforce each other”, a definition proposed by Sirma Bilge in a paper published by Relais-femmes in *Nouvelles pratiques sociales*, vol. 19, n° 1, and titled « Penser l'intervention féministe à l'aune de l'approche intersectionnelle : défis et enjeux ».

Contextual background

THE NEED TO TAKE GENDER EQUALITY INTO ACCOUNT IN A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

Sustainable development – development that is economically efficient, socially equitable, and ecologically sound – is becoming a pillar of municipal governance and a major axis of development in Montréal. In this context, the CM reiterates that equality is a fundamental aspect of sustainable development and, as such, it must be a guiding principle of municipal action in all areas.

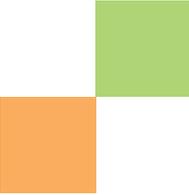
The sustainable development approach involves giving real meaning to **participatory democracy** with a new form of governance that promotes the involvement and participation of all members of society in decision-making. In this sense, the full participation of the women of Montréal in municipal democracy is key.

Taking into account gender equality in Montréal means considering two fundamental questions:

- **territorial solidarity** to reduce inequalities between the various boroughs and neighbourhoods throughout the city;
- **construction of a Montréal identity** that supports the ownership of public spaces by all citizens and the identification of common values, while respecting diversity.

All these issues come under the same heading: to make Montréal **an even more inclusive, egalitarian and democratic city**.

The **Montréal Development Plan** (MDP), to be adopted in 2013, will present a new vision of territorial development based on, among other things, specific municipal orientations on sustainable development and the fight against poverty. In this context, the CM reiterates that **urban planning is not neutral** and can have a major impact on gender inequalities and social inequalities in general.



The development of a **new urban planning vision** is a crucial issue for Montréal women. They want their concerns to be taken into account, through:

- **safe** urban design for all;
- **inclusive** urban design that creates accessible spaces that meet the needs of various social groups (gender, age, cultural origin, social status);
- **democratic** urban design that promotes ownership of space by different social groups through the enhancement of local features and development of green spaces;
- **ecological** urban design mindful of the environment and quality of life.
- More precisely, it is critical that we use **existing urban planning tools**, such as the *Guide d'aménagement pour un environnement urbain sécuritaire*, the municipal policy for universal accessibility and the policy for equal participation of women and men to Montréal's life.

These principles must be systematically and genuinely integrated **into the development plan of the Ville de Montréal and of each borough**. Similarly, we must further consider the expertise citizens developed about their environment and the means required to improve it.

It is on the basis of these principles that the CM wants to share its municipal vision. Three **complementary axes requiring decompartmentalized actions** were selected to highlight municipal issues for Montréal women: (1) Full participation of Montréal women in socio-economic development and the fight against poverty; (2) Universal accessibility of municipal services in urban design and quality of living environment; and (3) Municipal governance with regard to women's participation.

FULL PARTICIPATION OF MONTRÉAL WOMEN IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Women, first to be affected by poverty in Montréal

Montréal is the city that has the highest rate of poverty in Quebec. However, **poverty often wears a female face**. Among female Montrealers aged 15 and older, nearly 23% live below the low income threshold².

Some groups of women are particularly affected by poverty: heads of single-parent families, seniors, immigrants, Aboriginals, and women with disabilities.

Poverty has a direct impact on people's health. The 2012 report of the Montréal Health and Social Services Agency stresses the importance of the "**social inequalities in health**" in Montréal. The economically disadvantaged

are often those most affected by unsanitary housing, harsh living and working conditions, all of which affect their health. Women are overrepresented in this group. They are more likely to suffer a deterioration of their health and have difficulty accessing health care services. This situation is even more worrying for immigrant women, recently arrived, whose economic insertion is frail.

A significant factor of poverty: the employment situation of women

Women remain less integrated than men economically. They work mainly in sectors that pay less, and occupy more precarious positions.

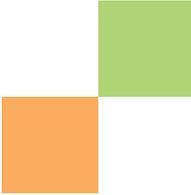
The employment situation of women in Montréal presents inequalities at various levels. Gender segregation within the labor market comes with a **concentration of female labor in a limited number of sectors**, mainly retail, clerical work and early childhood care³. Then there is a **mismatch between the skills of the female workforce and the current needs of the labor market**. In other words, areas that are

currently offering employment opportunities do not match the skills of the majority of women in employment or seeking employment⁴. Thus, **the employment rate of women remains lower than that of men**. This situation is even more worrying for immigrant women whose employment rate is lower than the overall average for women in Montréal. The presence of young children also has an impact on the employment rate of women, due to the fact that balancing family, work and school is still mostly the burden of women.

² Conseil du statut de la femme, *Portrait statistique Égalité femmes/hommes – Où en sommes-nous à Montréal?*, Québec, 2010, p. 27.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴ Comité consultatif femmes en développement de la main-d'œuvre du Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail (CIAFT). *Pour préparer la main-d'œuvre féminine de demain! Construire des bases solides, ouvrir les champs professionnels et changer les mentalités*, Montréal, January, 2011, p. 13.



This situation creates **income disparities**. For instance, in Montréal, women earn only 70.2% of what men earn annually⁵. This gap, along with part-time work, which is more frequent among women, have repercussions on all sources of income, such as pension benefits and employment insurance benefits, which are normally lower for women.

In recent years, increasing job insecurity combined with a sharp increase in the cost of housing in Montréal has brought about an increase of the **working poor phenomenon**, which particularly touches women. The employment income of the working poor is not enough to meet basic needs (housing, food, health) and affects the entire

family unit. The fight against inequalities in employment is essential if we are to act on inequalities in other spheres of social life and eliminate the increasing feminization of poverty.

Improving the situation of women in employment is a major issue for Montréal women.

- **As a major employer, the Ville de Montréal should adopt exemplary practices**, including promoting a better balance of family-work-school for its employees; supporting women in blue-collar jobs; and fighting against the insecurity of temporary jobs, predominantly occupied by women in the Ville de Montréal.
- **Raising awareness among economic partners about the need to implement egalitarian practices** is another lever for municipal action. Consideration for gender equality, for example, could be integrated into the criteria for awarding public contracts when outsourcing. The egalitarian practices of our business partners and suppliers could be more highly valued.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Some Montréal women more disadvantaged than others

More than three quarters of all newcomers to Québec settle in Montréal every year. In 2006, 45% of women in Montréal were immigrants⁶. Despite a higher level of education than the Québec average, **immigrant women are less present in the labor market**. In 2006, their employment rate was 45.7% compared to 53% for Montréal women in general⁷. When employed, their wages are often lower and their working conditions, more precarious. For immigrant women, the situation is of special concern, as professional integration is one of the main factors of insertion in the host society.

The specific difficulties they face in accessing employment⁸ are the result of several factors: **lack of available child care, non-recognition of diplomas and qualifications**

obtained abroad, lack of fluency in French, and difficult access to French courses, **racism and double discrimination** experienced both as a women and as a person of foreign origin both in the area of employment, but also in other areas such as housing. Racial discrimination affects not only immigrant women, but all visible minorities. Other categories of women are also particularly affected by the difficulties of economic integration: **heads of single-parent families, women with disabilities, and Aboriginal women**.

All these women face specific challenges that come into interaction with those affecting women in general.

- This reality calls for **the need to develop an intersectional approach towards employability and the fight against poverty** in Montréal. This approach takes into account the overlap of different factors of discrimination: gender, ethno-cultural origin, visible minority, disability, etc.

⁶ Table des groupes de femmes de Montréal, *Avis régional présenté à l'Alliance pour la solidarité pour l'élaboration du Plan régional pour la solidarité et l'inclusion sociale*, Montréal, 2009, p. 7.

⁷ Conseil du statut de la femme, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁸ These concerns were discussed at the *États généraux sur la situation des femmes immigrées et racisées*, held in Montréal 20, 21 and 22 February, 2012.

Women's entrepreneurship: a strategy for economic development and the fight against poverty

In recent years, women's entrepreneurship has grown exponentially in Canada and Quebec. In Montréal, we see **an important proportion of immigrant women among entrepreneurs**. The sectors most vested by women are the service and retail trades. Although on average their companies are younger and generate less profit⁹, they achieve a very high success rate and the longevity of their business exceeds that of their male counterparts. In addition, women share different entrepreneurial values, more focused on social economy and local development. The main difficulties these women face are access to external sources of funding, family-work balance, a lesser integration into professional networks (especially among immigrant women) and less access to training. In this

context, specific support and coaching resources are needed to address the challenges that women entrepreneurs face and put forward adapted solutions.

Women's entrepreneurship should be seen by the Ville de Montréal as a means of economic development with a view to promoting both sustainability and equality. **Female entrepreneurship encourages women's economic autonomy, and thus becomes a tool of prevention in the fight against poverty, especially for immigrant women.**

Developing women's entrepreneurship is an important way to contribute to the economic development of Montréal and to fight poverty. To encourage women entrepreneurs, priority may be given to two means of action:

- Collecting gendered data on entrepreneurship: the CLD and CDEC networks could use the budgets allocated to them to establish gendered portraits of entrepreneurs in relation to their networks.
- Support and fund existing resources dedicated to women's entrepreneurship and community credit organizations whose projects reach a large number of immigrant women.

⁹ Compagnie F, *Sommaire exécutif – L'entrepreneuriat féminin comme stratégie au développement économique de l'île de Montréal. Recommandations formulées au ministère du Développement économique, de l'Innovation et de l'Exportation*, Montréal, 2011.

Social economy: a window of opportunity for women

Just as with women's entrepreneurship, social economy is an avenue to explore to improve the economic situation of women in Montréal. This sector accounts for 7% of total employment on the island of Montréal, and is becoming increasingly important, particularly in the context of the socio-economic revitalization strategies implemented at the local level.

Women play an important role in this sector, as members of boards, workers, volunteers or users of service. They outnumber men in leadership positions and paid employment in two areas: health and social services, and housing¹⁰. They are the main beneficiaries of social economy

gains as these organizations contribute to the fight against poverty and social exclusion. For all these reasons, this sector seems to be a window of opportunity for women in terms of leadership, socio-economic insertion and the improvement of living condition.

Nevertheless, the sector is subject to the increasing insecurity of the labor market or to the reproduction of the sexual division of labor. Indeed, health and social services is a sector where duties are traditionally gender-determined and one which is especially affected by the increasing precariousness of the job market.

The main challenge for women of Montréal regarding social economy is to explore **the conditions under which this sector could help improve their economic security and autonomy.**

- In this context, it may be appropriate **to establish the portrait of the social economy in Montréal** using the framework of gender-based analysis (GBA). This portrait would **recognise this sector's contribution** in answering local needs. It would also give greater visibility to women working in this sector, and identify the challenges and courses of action to better position them¹¹.

¹⁰ Chaire de recherche du Canada en économie sociale (edited by Marie J. Bouchard), *Portrait statistique de l'économie sociale de la région de Montréal*, Montréal, 2008, p. 39.

¹¹ To read more, see the final report *Femmes au cœur de l'économie sociale et solidaire* published by Relais-femmes, April 2012 (available online: <http://www.relais-femmes.qc.ca/publication/2012-01-femmes-au-coeur-de-l'economie-sociale-et-solidaire>).

Effects of poverty on access to housing

The sharp rise in prices in the Montréal rental market over the last ten years has resulted in a shortage of affordable housing for low-income households, which affects women first. Two groups are particularly affected by these problems: **older women and the heads of single-parent families**. The two groups represent a very large proportion of the population living in public housing (HLM) in Montréal. No new public housing has been built since 1993, and the waiting list of the *Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal* continues to grow (about 22,000 households are on the waiting list while only 2,000 units become available each year¹²).

Some women encounter additional barriers to accessible housing because they are immigrants, racialized, Aboriginal or handicapped. **The lack of affordable and adapted housing** for disabled persons is particularly challenging since they often live alone. Moreover, **the lack of housing suitable for large families** mostly affects immigrant families whose income is often lower. The lack of access to affordable housing forces a number of women and low-income households to live in **substandard housing**, with negative impacts on their health and safety.

Therefore, municipal intervention concerning housing plays a major role in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. The ***Strategy for the Inclusion of Affordable Housing in New Residential Projects***, launched by the Ville de Montréal in 2005, is in this respect particularly important because it can provide access to safe and affordable housing to households with low and modest incomes while **maintaining social diversity** in neighborhoods. Note that a provincial bill, whose adoption was expected in autumn of 2012, aims to give more power to municipalities, enabling them to compel boroughs to apply the inclusion strategy on their territory.

¹² Website of the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal (www.omhm.qc.ca).

For the women of Montréal, **access to affordable, decent housing that is adapted to their needs** is a major issue. As such, several challenges must be addressed:

- **Maintaining the availability of affordable housing** throughout the Montréal area. To this end, an effective and coherent implementation of the **Strategy of inclusion** by all boroughs is essential to reduce regional disparities relative to affordable social housing in new residential projects. To do this, it might be useful to rely on boroughs that have set goals that surpass those defined by the Ville de Montréal. In addition, to develop the **offer of social and community-managed housing**, pressure must be maintained on federal and provincial governments for the renewal of existing programs. Similarly, while the financial arrangements of **housing coops and NPOs** with the federal government are expected to end in the coming years, it is essential to **maintain financial support to existing organisations** to ensure affordable rents and carry on with their social mission.
- **Maintaining diversity within the housing supply** by increasing the availability of larger housing tailored to the needs of families, and of suitable housing for people with reduced mobility or disabilities. A diversified residential offer is essential to stop the migration of young families to the suburbs and meet the challenges of an ageing population in the coming years. This challenge concerns women first and foremost because they will be the majority of seniors, and most of them will live alone.
- **Maintaining the quality of housing in Montréal.** To this end, the fight against substandard housing is paramount and refers, more broadly, to public health issues. Boroughs must enforce the *By-law concerning the sanitation, maintenance and safety of dwelling units* and apply swift and severe sanctions when owners do not comply with their obligations.
- Lastly, the high concentration of disadvantaged people in certain areas shows the importance of acting not only on the issue of housing but also on quality of life and social support. Programs that aim to develop **community support and urban activity** play a key role in fostering social cohesion and urban inclusion. Funding of projects under the Agreement to fight poverty (co-signed by the *Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale* and the Ville de Montréal), is a major tool of intervention in this area.

An alarming increase in the number of women experiencing homelessness

One consequence of the increasing poverty of some Montréal women is **the rising number of women experiencing homelessness**¹³. In 2001, women represented an estimated 23% of the homeless population in Montréal. Some groups seem particularly affected by this phenomenon: Aboriginal youth, immigrants, seniors,

and youth aged 18 to 25 years old. However, homelessness takes different forms when experienced by women. Women deprived of a place to live are not systematically living “on the street”. Thus, the reality of women’s homelessness is largely unknown and socially invisible.

Taking into account the specificity and the diversity of women’s homelessness is an issue of increasing importance for Montréal women.

- In this context, GBA could be systematically used as a tool to gather and study data to better understand the reality of vulnerable people and the factors that lead to homelessness. It is imperative to take into account the diversity and the specificity of women’s experiences and to work on the factors of economic impoverishment and social exclusion that lead to this situation.

Municipal action against poverty must be part of a broader vision that allows action on the fundamental causes of the phenomenon, particularly by encouraging the full participation of Montréal women in the socio-economic development of Montréal. Meanwhile, the Ville de Montréal can act in several areas that have a direct

impact on the quality of life of disadvantaged people, among whom women are overrepresented. Thus, municipal actions for the accessibility of public transportation, for urban planning and for access to sport and recreation facilities should equally be considered as key elements in the fight against poverty.

¹³ Conseil du statut de la femme, *Réflexion sur l’itinérance des femmes en difficulté : un aperçu de la situation*, Montréal, April 2012, p. 8.

ACCESS TO MUNICIPAL SERVICES FOR ALL WOMEN OF MONTRÉAL

The precarious economic situation of a number of women in Montréal affects their access to municipal services, including their ability to move around the city and take full advantage of social and cultural spaces they have at their disposal.

Access to public transportation: a major issue for low-income Montréal women

Mobility is a key factor of economic and social integration in urban areas. However, people who experience economic difficulties are those most affected by mobility issues. Geographically, their limited choices in housing may force them to settle in under-served sectors, further from the centre and thus from employment opportunities. In financial terms, the steady increase of public transit service rates is hard on them. The access of these populations to places of work, to goods, to services, and more generally to participation in social life, are considerably restricted.

The situation is all the more critical for Montréal women because they are more likely than men to use public transit. In Montréal, nearly 40% of employed active women use public transit to get to work¹⁴. **Geographic and economic accessibility** are the main obstacles to mobility for women. The lack of local transit service results in the needs of Montréal women not being met, as their movements must often take place in under-served areas. In addition, the burden of balancing the conflicting demands of daily

life (paid work, care for children or other dependents) still falls most often on women, which has the effect of multiplying their movements and diversifying their journeys or transportation schedule. This reality is particularly significant for **women who are heads of a single-parent household**. The absence of social tariffs hurts women harder, especially if they are low-income.

Some women are particularly affected by mobility issues. Women who are **recent immigrants**, struggling with social and economic integration, must also learn the workings of the public transportation service which, for some, represents an additional obstacle. **Older women**, who make up nearly 60% of people aged 65 and over in Montréal, often live in a situation of economic vulnerability and are therefore highly dependent on public transportation that should be better adapted to their needs. Finally, **people with disabilities** still face a very limited application of the principle of universal access within the regular public transportation network.

¹⁴ Table des groupes de femmes de Montréal, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

Incidentally, the **issue of safety in the design** of public transit sites and major bus stops remains important for Montréal women as well as for seniors, whose sense of insecurity can be especially severe in certain neighborhoods.

To this end, the program *Between Two Stops*, implemented by the STM in 1996, is a step in the right direction¹⁵.

The accessibility of public transit service is a major issue for Montréal women and several challenges stem from it:

- In terms of **geographical accessibility**, local service must be developed in relation to local needs while taking into account the specific mobility of women.
- In terms of **affordability**, social pricing should be implemented for low-income households, as well as various fare formulas better adapted to public transportation users (single-parent families, large families, students over 25 years old, etc.).
- In terms of **universal access**, it is essential to accelerate the implementation of universal accessibility across the entire public transportation network, prioritizing metro stations and major bus lines, taking into account access for strollers, and adapting the information and signaling systems to accommodate persons with visual or hearing impairments.
- In terms of **adapted transport** (paratransit), the needs of users should be met within the framework of the current partnership between the STM and the taxi industry, while working closely with community organizations.
- In terms of **safety**, the program *Between two stops* deserves to be better publicized and expanded to other groups such as seniors while ensuring its effective implementation by all STM bus drivers. More broadly, the principles of *Le Guide d'aménagement pour un environnement urbain sécuritaire* should be applied consistently around and inside metro stations, commuter trains and major bus stops.

¹⁵ This program allows a woman to ask the bus driver to let her get off the bus between stops to reduce the walking distance to her destination. This service is exclusively offered to women, in the evening, on all STM bus routes, including the night network.



Universal access to municipal services: still a limited implementation

Besides public transportation, issues relating to **universal access** concern all municipal services. Women with disabilities or functional impairments (motor skills deficiency, hearing, visual or intellectual impairment) are particularly affected by the lack of accessibility of services because of a combination of obstacles related to their gender (social and economic vulnerability, gender-specific mobility needs), and those related to their disability. They are also more likely than men with disabilities to live alone and are therefore highly dependent on the availability of municipal services in all spheres.

The Ville de Montréal is committed to “promote universal access in organizing the city and specifically in municipal buildings and services”¹⁶. Although progress is noticeable, significant work remains to be done in terms of universal accessibility in Montréal, from the layout of municipal buildings to supportive care and attention to people with functional limitations who wish to use recreational facilities. This principle should remain a permanent concern for the entire Administration if it is to be gradually integrated into all spheres of municipal jurisdiction.

¹⁶ Ville de Montréal, *Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities, Article 28.f*, Montréal, 2011, p. 9.

Accessibility and diversity of the municipal offer in sports, recreation and culture: a factor in the fight against poverty

Access to recreation is an important aspect of the quality of a living environment in a sustainable urban development approach. Today, the inability of some residents to participate in recreational activities stems from a situation of poverty and social exclusion. Promoting accessibility in this area is an action that contributes to fighting poverty.

Many factors influence accessibility to the municipal offer of sports and recreation. **Geographical accessibility**, specifically as regards the quality of local transportation services, is a determining factor for low-income individuals, especially women, the elderly and the mobility impaired. **Economic accessibility** is an issue for all disadvantaged groups, especially in the practice of structured activities (as opposed to free recreational activities open to all). Lower rates for families and the elderly are the rule in most boroughs, but costs remain high for adult-oriented activities in general. This tends to restrict the participation of women in individual activities, especially for mothers with young children who often must bear the cost of the activity itself, as well as peripheral costs, such as child care. **Cultural accessibility** must also be taken into account in a context characterized by an important immigrant presence. For new immigrants, recreational activities can represent a means of integration into Montréal society. For immigrant women, who are particularly disadvantaged in matters of professional insertion, recreational activities can represent an important area for socializing and a way of breaking out of isolation. Lastly, **temporal accessibility** can be problematic, especially for women, who often occupy atypical employment with variable schedules to which must be added domestic chores and child care. And so, women face difficulties resulting from their economic precariousness, but also from a municipal offer often ill-adapted to their needs and availability.

Faced with these difficulties of access to structured activities, the **quality and accessibility of infrastructures and community equipment** appear all the more important. Parks, libraries, *maisons de la culture*, municipal swimming pools and arenas represent the most economically accessible for sport and recreational activities for families. Yet, **important territorial disparities** remain. The cost of accessing these facilities varies widely from one borough to the next, as do the diversity and quality of the existing infrastructures.

The vision of Montréal as a “cultural metropolis” must be revisited in light of three issues. Much as with access to leisure, the democratization of culture is an important factor of social and cultural integration. It implies maintaining geographical and economical accessibility to areas of cultural dissemination to encourage their attendance by all Montrealers. It is also an issue of **civic participation** through the contribution of all Montrealers, both men and women, to the creation of cultural activities and the recognition of the diversity of cultural practices. Lastly, culture is directly linked to the creation of a collective identity based on community values shared by all residents while taking into account the diversity of the various groups in terms of ethno-cultural origins, age, gender and social status. Thus, access to culture for one and all must be considered to be closely related to building of a “Montréal identity” that is inclusive and united both socially and geographically.

The accessibility of sports, recreational and cultural activities is an important issue to Montréal women and requires taking many factors into account:

- **Maintenance of financial accessibility** is a priority and can take many forms:
 - implementing systems that make it possible to offer structured activities at a more reduced cost (for example, providing on-site affordable child-care service);
 - continuing to offer free, or very affordable, and high-quality sports, recreational and cultural infrastructures and equipment, such as libraries, municipal swimming pools, houses of culture and arenas;
 - applying general and standardized system of family rates over the entire Montréal territory, including all cultural facilities.
- **The reduction of territorial disparities** is a challenge that can be taken up by different means:
 - the definition of a set of basic services common to all boroughs in order to ensure a minimum threshold of accessible, quality municipal services throughout Montréal;
 - designing parks and their facilities to take into account the needs of the overall population, thus encouraging their use by various social groups (gender, age, social status, mobility-challenged).
- **Cultural diversity in the municipal sport, recreation and cultural offer** is an issue for immigrants from various cultural communities so that they feel better represented and attracted by the activities and the municipal cultural facilities (for example, diversify the contents of libraries, cultural programs, etc.).
- **The issue of civic participation** must be taken into consideration. Ensure the active participation of all citizens, both men and women, including local artists, in the development of cultural programming in the boroughs. Special attention must be given to the means used to publicize events to make sure that the entire population of the territory is reached.
- **The construction of Montréal's collective identity** must be encouraged by:
 - highlighting the diversity of the historical and cultural heritage of Montréal. To this end, the contribution of women to the history and heritage of Montréal must be given higher visibility and value in a systematic manner within each cultural project;
 - the preservation of the identities of neighbourhoods and local characteristics while still promoting the development of community values common to all Montrealers.

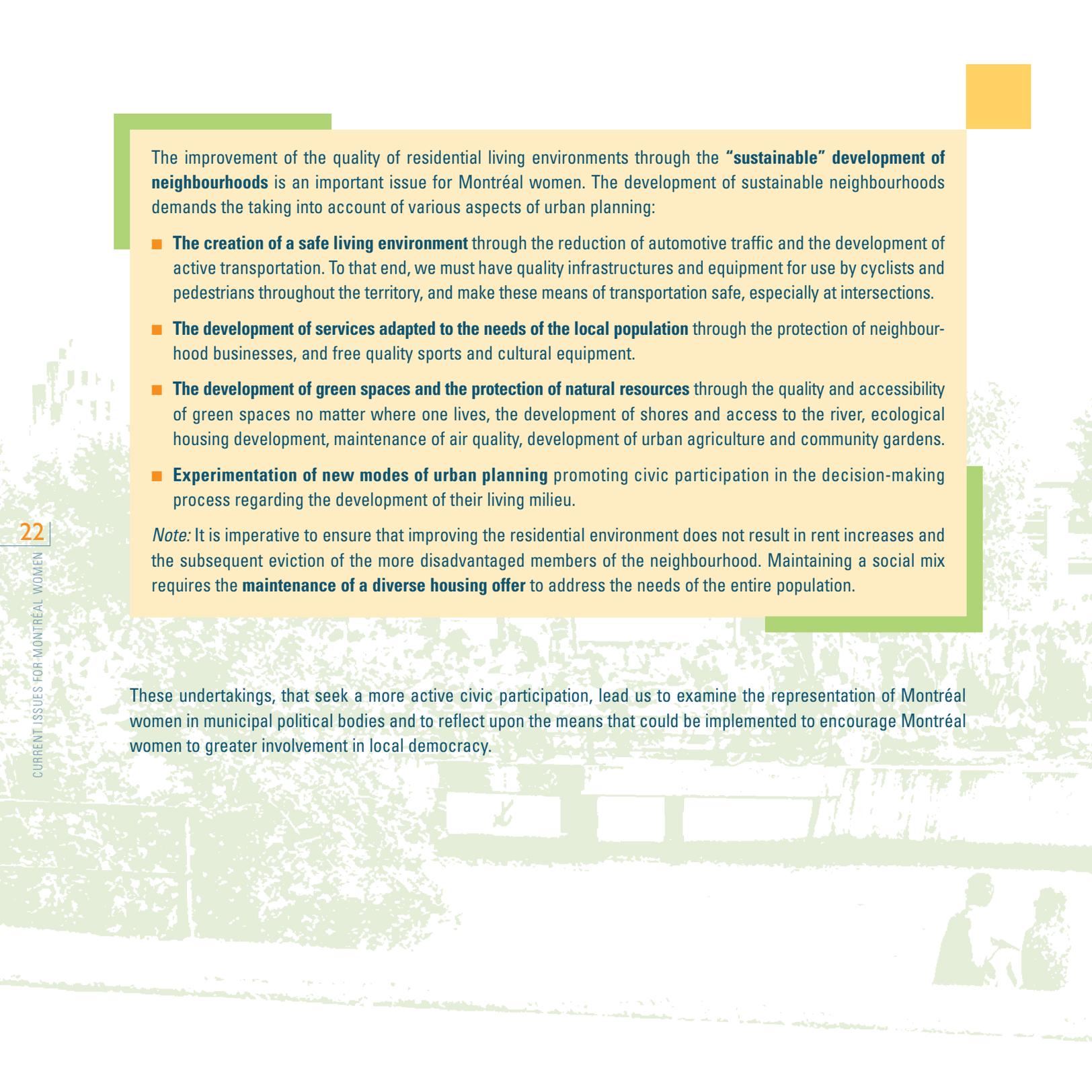


[Urban development and the quality of residential living areas

The sustainable development approach requires taking into account various facets of urban planning in an integrated fashion. Transportation infrastructures, urban architecture, municipal sports and recreational facilities, the development of green spaces must be planned with the objective of reducing social and territorial inequities. This approach also leads to the development of new modes of urban planning encouraging civic participation in decisions affecting their quality of life. In this view, taking into account the concerns and needs of Montréal women is, for the CM, an indispensable step towards the development of a more integrated, inclusive and united approach to the living spaces of an urban milieu.

The problem of the **exodus of young families to Montréal suburbs** has been recognized as a priority by the Ville de Montréal. The two main reasons invoked by young people are the cost of housing and the quality of life in which the parents hope to raise their children. In this context, the Ville de Montréal promotes, most notably in its transportation plan, **the development of green spaces** through the reduction of car traffic, improved security, and air quality with an aim to improving the quality of life in neighbourhoods.

Since 2009, the *Centre d'écologie urbaine de Montréal* has contributed to neighborhood initiatives in four Montréal boroughs. These undertakings were launched **in close collaboration with local organizations and residents**. Civic mobilization has allowed for the development of a common territorial vision, the setting of priorities, and the construction of a local development plan to be submitted to the various borough councils. Innovative means of governance have been tested, placing civic participation and mobilization at the heart of the urban planning process in targeted neighbourhoods.

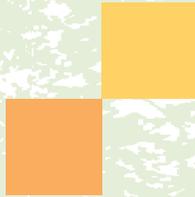
The background of the page is a photograph of a park. In the foreground, there is a playground with a red and blue structure. In the middle ground, a group of people, including children and adults, are gathered on a grassy area. In the background, there are trees and a building. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

The improvement of the quality of residential living environments through the “**sustainable**” **development of neighbourhoods** is an important issue for Montréal women. The development of sustainable neighbourhoods demands the taking into account of various aspects of urban planning:

- **The creation of a safe living environment** through the reduction of automotive traffic and the development of active transportation. To that end, we must have quality infrastructures and equipment for use by cyclists and pedestrians throughout the territory, and make these means of transportation safe, especially at intersections.
- **The development of services adapted to the needs of the local population** through the protection of neighbourhood businesses, and free quality sports and cultural equipment.
- **The development of green spaces and the protection of natural resources** through the quality and accessibility of green spaces no matter where one lives, the development of shores and access to the river, ecological housing development, maintenance of air quality, development of urban agriculture and community gardens.
- **Experimentation of new modes of urban planning** promoting civic participation in the decision-making process regarding the development of their living milieu.

Note: It is imperative to ensure that improving the residential environment does not result in rent increases and the subsequent eviction of the more disadvantaged members of the neighbourhood. Maintaining a social mix requires the **maintenance of a diverse housing offer** to address the needs of the entire population.

These undertakings, that seek a more active civic participation, lead us to examine the representation of Montréal women in municipal political bodies and to reflect upon the means that could be implemented to encourage Montréal women to greater involvement in local democracy.



THE INVOLVEMENT OF MONTRÉAL WOMEN IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE

Representative political bodies must reflect the diversity of the population in terms of ethno-cultural origin, gender and social status. In this sense, **the active participation of Montréal women in municipal governance represents a major issue of local democracy.**

Women's access to elected office and to high-level municipal management positions

In the *Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities*, the Ville de Montréal commits to "Promoting representation by women of all origins, Aborigines, visible minorities and members of ethnic and cultural communities and young people within consultative and decision-making bodies¹⁷." Yet, women remain under-represented in municipal political bodies and are still a minority in management positions. In this context, the CM considers that the various **measures to promote equality** represent an indispensable means of action, if we hope to increase the presence of elected women in municipal bodies, while taking into consideration the diversity of Montréal women. These measures could target the permanent commissions of the municipal council, the city's executive committee,

the nominations by the Ville de Montréal to boards of directors, as well as the advisory committees on city planning of each borough.

Political parties also have a role to play in matters of parity, beginning with the recruiting of women of all origins, as candidates, and their placement in electoral districts where they have a chance of being elected. Offering support to women to obtain financing and help run their electoral campaign would constitute appropriate tools in this sense.

Moreover, it is important that women who occupy elected office or management positions **be granted greater visibility**, notably by through the systematic feminization of all municipal documents.

Civic participation of Montréal women in local democracy

The place of women in municipal governance also relates to **civic participation of Montréal women** in local municipal bodies, especially in the boroughs. This involves the promotion of active citizenship for everyone through **innovative and inclusive practices of participative**

democracy. This civic participation must not be restricted to consultations with the local population, but must also allow participation in the process of deliberation in close cooperation with local political representatives and experts associated with decision-making.

¹⁷ Ville de Montréal, *Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities, Article 16.f*, Montréal, 2011, p. 7.

For Montréal women, the challenge they face in terms of civic participation calls into account many issues. Women often see themselves as less capable of occupying political office due to a lesser understanding of the workings and political bodies of local democracy. This is especially true for women from poorer areas. In this sense, the practices used to promote participative democracy can greatly influence the presence of women as citizens.

The “**Citizens' Declaration**” projects undertaken by many women’s centres between 2003 and 2006 have put in place tools to that end that need to be developed more systematically. The goal of the exercise was to encourage civic participation of all women through collective mobilization, popular education, and the re-appropriation of municipal issues. Based on women’s concerns, concrete proposals were formulated regarding the improvement of living environments, and this, to the benefit of the entire local community. These declarations make local

issues part of a more **global and inclusive vision of local development** based on the values of fairness and social justice. In this way, they become true lessons in participative democracy and help women to think of new modes of governance that encourage the civic participation of women in their diversity.

On a more practical plane, particular attention must be brought to bear on the **accessibility** of those places where civic participation can occur, especially the borough councils (a safe location, easy to access by public transit) and to set the schedule taking into account the fact that household duties are still mostly performed by women. Lastly, the **accessibility of information** is also an issue for women. On this point, targeted communication could be put in place to better reach women (for example, through schools, community centres, CLSCs).

Active civic participation of Montréal's women in all their diversity constitutes a crucial issue for local democracy and can be encouraged by different factors, such as:

- **the creation and transmission of information tools and civic education** on the workings of local bodies and politics, especially by supporting women’s groups who have developed considerable expertise in this area;
- **the development of less formal forums of exchange with local elected officials** to facilitate the “de-mystification of politics” (for example, lunch and learn at local community centres);
- **dissemination of the *Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities*** to the entire population;
- **active participation of women on neighbourhood citizens' committees** (advisory committees on urbanism, housing committees, local action committees) and the **creation of women's citizen committees** to defend the interests and address the concerns of women on the local level;
- **experimentation with innovative mechanisms of civic participation**, such as citizen juries or even the **participative budget**, where the entire budget or parts of the budget are submitted to citizens for discussion and deliberation. This approach could, for example, be part of a borough’s pilot project, taking into consideration the differentiated impacts of the budgetary choices on men and women within the framework of a **gendered budget**.

CONCLUSION

Sustainable urban development requires taking into account the objective of equality of Montréal men and women in all domains. The CM would like to remind us that the **fight against social inequality based on gender**, as part of the larger fight against poverty, produces **benefits that extend far beyond the quality of life of women**. As the experiences of the citizens' declarations made by women's centres has shown, taking into account the preoccupations of Montréal women benefits the entire population, notably the more disadvantaged.

On a broader scale, equality is a motor for economic development. Only by maintaining solidarity between the individuals of a same society is social cohesion guaranteed. In other words, **economic development cannot be viable, if it does not take into consideration its impact in terms of social development**. Moreover, the objective of social and urban inclusion is indispensable to the development of a truly democratic society. It is to this vision of sustainable development that, with the present document, the CM would like to draw the collective attention of the men and women of Montréal.

In matters of urban development, two orientations seem essential to us. First, the fight against territorial disparities should be the priority of municipal action in all domains. The issue is to guarantee a certain homogeneity in the accessibility and quality of municipal services proffered in all of the city's boroughs so that everyone can enjoy a certain quality of life. To achieve this, the Ville de Montréal

must ensure the effective and harmonious application in each borough of the policies it has adopted (ex.: inclusion strategy, universal access policy, equality policy), while giving boroughs sufficient flexibility to go further in certain domains, if they so desire.

The reduction of territorial inequalities goes hand in hand with the idea of **developing the collective identity** of Montréal women. The present context of preparing the 375th anniversary of the founding of Montréal lends itself to reflecting on the common values shared by Montréal citizens. The Ville de Montréal has a role to play in building this collective identity. The choices made in regard to urban development are based on the principles and values expressed in the *Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities*. The Charter puts forth the values of respect, justice and fairness, and mentions the "collective desire to enrich Montréal's position as a democratic, united and inclusive city¹⁸." The ongoing challenge is to translate these values into concrete municipal action on a daily basis, and this, in all fields of endeavour. To do so, the CM advocates an open and integrated approach between the City's boroughs, but also between the various municipal services within each of the boroughs. The CM also invites citizens to get actively involved with the various bodies and local democratic processes and take part in building a collective identity for Montréal that will reach out to everyone.

¹⁸ Ville de Montréal, *Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities, Article 3*, Montréal, 2011, p. 5.

APPENDIX A

THE *CONSEIL DES MONTRÉALAISES*

The *Conseil des Montréalaises* was created in 2004, born of the municipal administration's desire to address the demands of various women's groups and the commitments made at the *Sommet de Montréal* in 2002.

The creation of the *Conseil* marks an important step in the measures taken by the Ville de Montréal in regard to women and the whole community. At the request of the municipal council, or of its own initiative, this advisory body assists the municipal administration in matters of equality between men and women and the status of women.

Appointed by the municipal council, the 15 members well represent the social and cultural diversity of Montréal as regards age, ethno-cultural origins, field of activity, and area of residence.

Through their work, they seek to contribute to the development of the Ville de Montréal so that it may become truly inclusive, safe, and an enjoyable living environment for women, no matter their social, material or physical status.

To feed its reflections and create bonds of solidarity, the *Conseil des Montréalaises* speaks and listens to members of various networks, particularly women's groups concerned about the status of women and society's evolution in a perspective of social justice.

Its functions, as defined in the regulations of the Ville de Montréal, are as follows:

- to counsel and proffer advice to the municipal council, the executive committee and the borough councils, at their request, on any dossier that could have an impact on the living conditions of Montréal women;
- to provide, of its own initiative or when requested to do so by the municipal council, advice on questions of gender equality or on the status of women, and to submit its recommendations;
- to contribute to the drafting and implementation of an overall policy on the equality of men and women in Montréal;
- to solicit opinions, to receive requests and suggestions from individuals or groups on questions relative to the equality of men and women and the status of women;
- to conduct or commission the conduct of studies and research it believes useful or necessary to the exercise of its functions.

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