

Hello, I am emailing you today to add to the voices of citizens asking for the city of Montreal to change how it allocates its funding. In accordance with the larger defund the SPVM movement and the black lives matter movement, as well as my personal belief system, I have outlined some demands for how money should be used. I am working off of The 10 demands published by the defund the SPVM movement, and quoting it directly when I do not feel the need to/have the appropriate knowledge to add to the statement.

1. Defunding:

The SPVM has a 665 million dollar budget. This reality alongside the amount of people without homes in our community, and the amount of people struggling because of the cost of living and minimum wage, indicates that the city of Montreal does not care for or prioritize the lives of its citizens, especially those who are affected by racism and colonialism. To rectify this I, alongside many others, ask that **50 %** of this budget be allocated to communities affected by these systems of violence, so social services and programs can be provided, and we can have a healthier community.

2. Disarming and Demilitarizing:

I do not want there to be government funded organizations that are armed with weapons and trained to enact violence on citizens. Whether this is purportedly done on the “behalf” of citizens or not, it is not something that I feel should be prized in our society. Therefore I ask you to “Withdraw all weapons from police officers, including lasers, batons, firearms, rubber bullets, tear gas, pepper spray, and sound canons; disband militarized police units, including SWAT teams and other units using military grade weapons and surveillance equipment”.

3. Decolonize

As a non-indigenous person I fully support and desire that our larger community invest in indigenous communities healing; as we have enacted so much colonial violence, that can not and should not be healed by using the means and ideologies of a colonizing body. Therefore we should invest a large sum of money (as well as energy and intellectual space) into empowering indigenous communities to heal and address the harm enacted onto them by the colonial body of the government. These actions should be further extended to oppressed and colonized groups, especially black communities. We should provide the means for the pursuit of justice to these communities, and be wise enough to listen to and learn from these ways of reconciling.

Reinvest

4. Invest funds into communities so they can use their knowledge about themselves to deal with situations of harm (“including harms related to violence, mental illness, and drug use”). Lived knowledge and the care and connection to their own communities puts community members in the best position to decide how they want to go about finding justice. Not all oppressed communities are the same, support them in finding ways to uniquely address issues.
5. “Create and fund unarmed service teams outside etc police to address mental health and drug related crises, traffic violations, gender-based violence, juvenile “summary” offences, and missing persons cases”.

6. Empower criminalized communities by investing in programs and services, especially programs for youth, programs for housing, and programs for community building and recreation. Put the power and resources for the development of these programs into the hands of these communities.

Decriminalize

7. As the government begins to benefit from the sale of marijuana, a glaring discrepancy in ideologies emerges into the social sphere; there are so many black, indigenous, and criminalized people sitting in jail for minor charges pertaining to weed. The "War on Drugs" is not the solution, criminalizing and effectively excommunicating people from society is not how people will actually heal. Providing people with the ability to connect to their communities and to heal in their own ways is. Criminalizing and excommunicating people from society creates an environment where people are forced to do work they may not want to do in ways that might be dangerous. Therefore we must "Decriminalize all drugs, sex work, and HIV status, eliminate the SPVM drug squad, morality squad, Eclipse squad and other units targeting marginalized communities, as well as all proactive surveillance programs, and **release and expunge criminal records for drug and sex work charges**"

8. "Eliminate social control bylaws related to "incivilities," and release and expunge all records related to these bylaws (including unpaid bylaw fines), including surveillance and enforcement in public transit"

9. Take police out of social spaces where youth congregate! Stop putting youth in relationship to and response to criminality. Take police out of community spaces and stop enforcing laws that are meant to criminalize those without homes in these spaces (like fining those who are in parks, **community spaces**, after midnight).

10. " End the criminalization and surveillance of migration by eliminating all collaboration between the police and Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) agents and any other form of involvement of the SPVM in immigration matters".

Investing in the police is literally killing people, and it has always done this, explicatedly to Indigenous, black, and coloured communities. I do not want this. I am begging you to head these demands. This is not an ideology, these are real peoples lives.

With Warmth,
Airin Finkelstein (They/Them)