



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

**From: The Black Students' Network of McGill University**

**Date: August 23rd, 2020**

**Subject: Defund the SPVM and Invest in Montreal's Black Communities**

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The Black Students' Network (BSN) operates as a service of the Student Society of McGill University. The vision of the BSN is twofold: 1) “to sensitize the McGill community to issues faced by Black people both historically and presently”<sup>1</sup> and 2) “to make McGill’s campus safe and accessible for Black students in order to support their academic success as well as their mental and physical well-being”<sup>2</sup>. Our appraisal of the budget is vital as Black McGill students are part of the Montreal community and are consequently affected by the decisions made by the City of Montreal. In addition, the efforts of the BSN largely complements the work of Black organizations in Montreal dedicated to enhancing the livelihoods of Montreal’s Black communities. The Black Students' Network of McGill University proposes the City of Montreal adheres to the following recommendations:

**Recommendation I: Defund the SPVM to Protect Black Communities**

In 2019, researchers from Université de Montréal, Université TÉLUQ and Université du Québec à Montréal reported that “Indigenous people and Black people were four to five times more likely than white people to be stopped by police”<sup>3</sup> during street checks. Street checks were

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<sup>1</sup>Black Students' Network of McGill. “About,” 2020.

<https://www.bsnmcgill.com/about>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Yoon, Jennifer, and Jaela Bernstien. “Black, Indigenous People 4 to 5 Times More Likely than Whites to Be Stopped by Montreal Police | CBC News.” CBC News. CBC/Radio Canada, October 7, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/spvm-racial-profiling-report-recommendations-and-findings-1.5311589>.

unjustifiably conducted by the SPVM to “stop people who [had] not necessarily committed an infraction”<sup>4</sup>. In response to the report, the SPVM released a new policy on street checks in July, to address the results of the report which detailed new guidelines for street checks instead of ceasing the practice altogether.

Revisions to policing in Montreal are not new. The new SPVM policy on street checks states the SPVM (formerly the SPCUM) participated in training targeting issues between policing institutions and “ethnocultural groups” in 1986<sup>5</sup>. Despite undergoing such training in previous decades, the SPVM continued to subjugate Black communities through the use of street checks which is detailed in the 2019 report mentioned above. It is also worth considering the language in the new SPVM policy “dealing with individual ethnocultural profiling behaviours”<sup>6</sup> can be likened to previous SPVM efforts that implemented “training on interventions with ethnocultural groups”<sup>7</sup>. Noting this, it is worth inquiring if the new policy on street checks will adequately address the marginalization of ethnocultural groups and more specifically the SPVM’s exploitation of “Black” individuals. This inquiry is imperative to make due to the similarities between certain aspects of the new policy and previous SPVM initiatives which have failed, as well as the negligence on the part of the SPVM with respect to abolishing the discriminatory practice of street checks.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> SPVM. “Le SPVM Publie Sa Politique Sur Les Interpellations Policières, Une Première Au Québec - Communiqués - Service De Police De La Ville De Montréal.” SPVM, <https://spvm.qc.ca/fr/Communiques/Details/14783>.

<sup>7</sup> “SPVM Policy on Police Checks.” SPVM, July 8, 2020. [https://spvm.qc.ca/upload/Fiches/Politique\\_sur\\_les\\_interpellations\\_policieres\\_du\\_SPVM\\_8\\_juillet\\_2020\\_EN\\_VF.pdf](https://spvm.qc.ca/upload/Fiches/Politique_sur_les_interpellations_policieres_du_SPVM_8_juillet_2020_EN_VF.pdf).

The SPVM's failure to cease street checks is a display of willful ignorance as groups such as the Black Coalition of Quebec<sup>8</sup> have called on the SPVM to cease street checks in entirety. This proves the SPVM does not have the desire to implement pragmatic steps to attend to the safety concerns of Montreal's Black communities.

The SPVM has defaulted on its mandate to "protect the lives and property of citizens"<sup>9</sup> as the safety concerns of Black communities (as expressed by the Black Coalition of Quebec), have not been adequately reflected in the SPVM's new policy. The SPVM's failure to fulfill its mandate calls for defunding as its current resources are not appropriated to protect all citizens equally.

## **Recommendation II: Redirect SPVM Budget Cuts to Organizations for Black Communities**

The SPVM is ill-equipped to appropriate its current monetary allocation appropriately as its policies are insufficient in mitigating the impacts of policing on Black communities as evidenced under Recommendation I. Coalitions in Montreal have suggested The City of Montreal ought to reallocate at least 50% (\$332 million)<sup>10</sup> of the SPVM budget to organizations and services that work towards enhancing the livelihoods of underserved communities (including Black communities) in Montreal.

An explicit dedication to Black community services is noticeably absent from the City's budget. Protests against anti-Black racism have transpired globally and in Montreal. The City of

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<sup>8</sup>Brittany Henriques, "Montreal Police Street Checks: 'Stopped Because of Their Ethnic Origin, Not Because They've Done Anything,'" Global News (Global News, October 25, 2019), <https://globalnews.ca/news/6082532/black-coalition-quebec-groups-montreal-police-street-check-ban/>.

<sup>9</sup> SPVM. "Organization." SPVM, <https://spvm.qc.ca/en/Pages/Discover-SPVM/Organization>.

<sup>10</sup> Loewen, Claire. "Montreal Activists Lay out Blueprint for Defunding Police | CBC News." CBC News. CBC/Radio Canada, July 7, 2020. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/defund-police-community-groups-montreal-1.5640782>.

Montreal ought to fulfill the moral obligation of attending to the systemic inequalities that provoked these protests.

Communities with large Black populations have been severely neglected by the City. In an open letter, citizens of Montreal North noted that the “borough is characterized by social problems that should have alerted the authorities much sooner”<sup>11</sup> and there are “insufficient resources in health and social services”<sup>12</sup> accompanied by “underfunded community organizations”<sup>13</sup>. The City’s neglect of social services for Montreal North has led to Black communities being affected the most by COVID-19 in the city<sup>14</sup>. Black organizations such as The Black Community Resource Centre (BCRC) and the Centre International de Documentation et d’Information Haïtienne and Caribéenne et Afro-canadienne (CIDIHCA) provide essential services such as job-seeking and conflict management tools<sup>15</sup> to Black communities. However, these resources are underfunded<sup>16</sup>.

The 2021 budget indicates the City of Montreal plans to allocate \$1 billion<sup>17</sup> to health and social services over five years which suggests these services will only be given around \$250

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<sup>11</sup>Pratka, Ruby Irene. “Quebec's Plan to Ease Lockdown Alarms Residents in Montreal North.” Ricochet, April 30, 2020.

<https://ricochet.media/en/3077/quebecs-plan-to-ease-lockdown-alarms-residents-in-montreal-north>  
h.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid

<sup>13</sup>Ibid

<sup>14</sup>Rocha, Roberto, Benjamin Shingler, and Jonathan Montpetit. “Montreal's Poorest and Most Racially Diverse Neighbourhoods Hit Hardest by COVID-19, Data Analysis Shows | CBC News.” CBC News. CBC/Radio Canada, June 11, 2020.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/race-covid-19-montreal-data-census-1.5607123>.

<sup>15</sup>Administrator, BCRC. “Home.” BCRC. BCRC Administrator December 4, 2019.

<https://bcrcmontreal.com/>.

<sup>16</sup>Maynard, Robyn. “Black Writing Matters.” Montreal Review of Books, March 17, 2017.

<https://mtlreviewofbooks.ca/reviews/black-writing-matters/>.

<sup>17</sup>Luft, Amy. “Highlights from Quebec's 2020-2021 Budget.” Montreal. CTV News, March 10, 2020.

<https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/highlights-from-quebec-s-2020-2021-budget-1.4847123?cache=lyphoblxpdpmw%3Fclipld>.

million each year. This number is significantly lesser than the \$665 million<sup>18</sup> the SPVM was allocated for a single year. The City ought to reconsider these allocations in efforts to reinvest funding into health and social services which could benefit all communities and Black communities more specifically. The City ought to allocate funding to Black community organizations such as the BCRC and the CIDIHCA to develop their capacity to deliver these services.

Multiple North American cities have provided examples the City could follow. New York City reduced the police budget and dedicated \$354 million<sup>19</sup> to fund “mental health, homelessness and education services”<sup>20</sup>. Similarly, the City of Los Angeles redistributed \$100<sup>21</sup> million of the Los Angeles Police Department’s budget to community organizations dedicated to aiding minority groups. New York City and Los Angeles are just two of 13 cities<sup>22</sup> in the United States that have taken concrete steps to invest in their communities by defunding their police services.

With the consideration of the reasons stated above, the City of Montreal ought to defund the SPVM and reallocate funding to community-based organizations to improve the quality of life for the Black people of Montreal.

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<sup>18</sup>Corriveau, Jeanne. “Le SPVM Suspend Le Déploiement Des Pistolets à Impulsion Électrique.” Le Devoir, November 29, 2019.

<https://www.ledevoir.com/politique/montreal/568145/le-spvm-suspend-le-deploiement-des-pistolets-a-impulsion-electrique>.

<sup>19</sup> McEvoy, Jemima. “At Least 13 Cities Are Defunding Their Police Departments.” Forbes Magazine, August 13, 2020.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jemimamcevoy/2020/08/13/at-least-13-cities-are-defunding-their-police-departments/>.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid

<sup>21</sup>Ibid

<sup>22</sup>Ibid