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**City of Montréal's Pre-Budget Consultation 2021:  
Brief regarding the reallocation of funds from the SPVM  
to community-led services**

by Montréal en Action

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**Founded in 2017, Montréal en Action is a grassroots organization led by founder Balarama Holness and more than fifty youth community leaders that encourages Montrealers to take action on key issues surrounding racism, discrimination, diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

Montréal en Action believes in democracy. After gathering 22,000 signatures from Montrealers in 2018, Montréal en Action made history by becoming the first organization in North America to force a public consultation on systemic racism and discrimination at the municipal level. Through social justice initiatives, mobilization campaigns, and the creation of educational content, we aim to bridge the gap between City Hall and the diverse communities of Montreal to build a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable city. Today, Montréal en Action is working to ensure that the City of Montréal implements the [38 recommendations from the Office de la Consultation Publique de Montréal \(OCPM\)](#), published on June 15, 2020.

**Montréal en Action is submitting this brief to the *Commission sur les finances et l'administration* to provide recommendations regarding the City of Montréal's 2021 budget.**

In the current context of the coronavirus pandemic, Montréal en Action believes that: 1) the Government of Québec should temporarily waive the obligation for the City of Montréal to balance its budget; 2) the City of Montréal should not raise property taxes to balance its budget; and 3) the City of Montréal should reallocate funds from the *Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal* (SPVM) towards underfunded community services.

**Montréal en Action recommends that the City of Montréal:**

1. Reallocate funding from the *Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal* (SPVM) towards mental health services;
2. Reallocate funding from the SPVM towards fighting territorial disparity;
3. Reallocate funding from the SPVM towards the production of comparative and differentiated populational data in order to analyze the variances between racialized persons, Indigenous persons, and White persons across municipal sectors and programs.

## **Recommendation 1: Reallocate funding from the Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM) towards community-led mental health services.**

Despite being [one of the safest cities in Canada](#), Montréal is one of the most policed cities in the country, where the [number of police officers](#) per capita is significantly higher than the national average. Furthermore, over the past 10 years, the SPVM's budget has increased by [33 percent](#). Today, the current operating budget of the SPVM is [\\$665.3 M](#), representing roughly 11 percent of the city's overall budget.

The systemic bias and racism of the SPVM towards racialized people in Montréal was highlighted by the [independent report from last year](#), which depicted how the SPVM's streetcheck practices disproportionately impacted racial minorities (four times more likely to be carded by police) and Indigenous peoples (six times more likely to be stopped by the police). As recommended by the 2018 [MTLSansProfilage](#) final report in *Poste de Quartier Saint-Michel*, reducing both the personnel and budget of the police by at least 20 percent while concomitantly transferring police resources to community-based programs would significantly improve the lives of Black, Indigenous, and People of colour in Montréal. Moreover, estimates indicate that decreasing the number of SPVM agents to the national average alone would decrease the city's annual budget by almost [\\$75M](#).

Instead, funds should be reallocated towards community-led social services that address the root causes of criminality and keep our communities safer. In Montreal, the [wait time for psychiatric services can reach over a year](#), thus making mental health services inaccessible to many. Increasing funding to mental health resources is necessary in the upcoming budget to reduce these wait times and to ensure that those in need have access to mental health services. Similarly, funding should be reallocated towards community-led social service providers that would respond to mental health related calls. Given that the SVPM [receives approximately 100 mental health calls a day](#)

[and 33 000 calls a year](#), no longer sending SPVM officers on mental health related calls can lead to a significant reduction in their workload. Such initiatives have already been successful in cities like [Oregon](#), where medical and crisis workers respond to “non-criminal crises, including homelessness, intoxication, disorientation, substance abuse and mental illness problems, and dispute resolution.” The annual operating budget for this free, confidential, and voluntary program is \$1.5 million and includes supporting 40 staff members, who are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. These staff members earn \$18/hr and additional benefits. Recreating a similar project in Montréal would require an operational budget of approximately 15 million dollars, which only represents 2.25% of the current SPVM budget. Indeed, such a program should collaborate with existing services and specialists currently working with the *Équipe de soutien aux urgences psychosociales* ([ÉSUP](#)) and the *Équipe mobile de référence et d'intervention en itinérance* ([ÉMRII](#)).

## **Recommendation 2: Reallocate funding from the SPVM towards fighting territorial disparity.**

In Montreal, territorial disparity has the greatest impact on [racialized and Indigenous persons](#). Large concentrations of racialized and Indigenous persons live in the City of Montréal's poorest neighbourhoods and boroughs, while lower concentrations populate the more affluent areas of the city.

Territorial disparity is the result of inequalities in urban planning and land use. It manifests itself in [many ways](#), notably through: i) [gentrification](#); ii) the uneven distribution of resources between and within boroughs; iii) limited municipal services and the lack of public investment in green spaces and public infrastructure in poorer neighbourhoods; iv) the presence of food deserts; and v) the lack of public transportation options offered by the Société de transport de Montréal (STM) in neighbourhoods largely populated by racialized and Indigenous persons.

Territorial disparity is interlinked with discrimination and has [serious consequences](#) on the health and life expectancy of Montrealers. Examples of these consequences were brought forward during the public consultation on systemic racism and discrimination. For example, [a case of racial profiling in Rivière-des-Prairies was linked to inadequate urban planning and access to housing](#) as racialized youth were forced to occupy parks outside of permitted hours given cramped and unhealthy living conditions in their family homes.

Funding from the SPVM should be reallocated towards initiatives that fight territorial disparity. Firstly, gentrification should be counterbalanced by the [provision of affordable social housing in all neighbourhoods with guaranteed accessibility for poor, racialized groups](#). Secondly, as indicated in Recommendation 31 of the [Report on the Public Consultation on Systemic Racism and Discrimination](#), funds should be reallocated to the

prompt creation of a working group composed of representatives of the boroughs and the municipal services concerned (e.g. *Service de l'urbanisme et de la mobilité*, *Service de la diversité et de l'inclusion sociale*), as well as members of civil society and research teams in order to take action on the uneven distribution of resources between and within boroughs. Thirdly, funds should be invested in: increasing [access and distribution of municipal services](#); [maintaining and building public recreation and sports facilities](#); and in [improving public parks](#) in the city's poorest neighbourhoods. Fourthly, funding should be reallocated towards encouraging [more community grocery stores](#) to open in neighbourhoods with [food deserts](#). Finally, funding should be reallocated towards [increasing bus routes and extending metro lines](#) into neighbourhoods lacking reliable and consistent access to transportation offered by the STM.

**Recommendation 3: Reallocate funding from the SPVM towards the production of comparative and differentiated populational data in order to analyze the variances between racialized persons, Indigenous persons, and White persons across municipal sectors and programs.**

The City of Montreal must reallocate funds from the SPVM towards tackling systemic racism and discrimination through the collection of race-based data. As recommended by the Commission for the [Public Consultation on Systemic Racism and Discrimination](#), the City of Montréal and the boroughs must produce publicly available comparative and disaggregated data every three years. This data is necessary to analyze the variances between racialized persons, Indigenous persons, and White persons with similar profiles (e.g. same gender, age, education) in targeted sectors such as employment, public security, housing, culture, social and economic development, as well as their participation in democratic life.

Without race-based data, the City of Montréal lacks an objective and scientific means of measuring how minority groups are impacted by practices such as racial profiling, as detailed above. Failure to collect race-based data also limits the City's capacity to properly measure the disproportionate effects of health crises such as the current pandemic on racialized and Indigenous communities. According to an [analysis by CBC News](#) published in June 2020 on how race, housing, and income are linked to the spread of coronavirus, after testing for 24 socio-economic factors, "the strongest correlation was between cases per 100,000 residents and the percentage of Black residents."

Other Canadian cities such as Toronto have committed to releasing race-based data in relation to coronavirus cases. For example, recent findings show that while only [9 percent of Toronto's population is Black, 21 percent of reported coronavirus cases in the city affect Black people](#). While it is clear that boroughs with large communities of colour such as Montréal-Nord [have been disproportionately affected](#), race-based data has yet



to be collected and made public by the City of Montréal. Certainly, such data would be of undeniable value to bettering the quality of life in communities such as Montréal-Nord where visible minorities make up [49 percent](#) of the borough's population.

By reallocating a portion of the SPVM's funds towards identifying how systemic issues affect racialized and Indigenous communities through race-based data collection, the City of Montréal may use [quantitative and qualitative data to design more effective policies and programs](#) to fight systemic racism and discrimination. Finally, as recommended by the National Secretariat Against Hate and Racism in Canada, [race-based data collection must be undertaken in collaboration with racialized and Indigenous communities and researchers](#), and the results of the data collection must be made available to the public.