

CONSULTATION PRÉBUDGÉTAIRE

Budget de fonctionnement 2020 de la Ville de Montréal

Submission from Simone Nichol

[I] would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the traditional and unceded territory of the Kanien'keha:ka (Mohawk), a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst nations.

I have always been committed to both participatory democratic collaboration, dialogue, arts-based community projects, in the service for the betterment of our natural and built environment.

I am very happy to be able to offer some ideas around how we, the citizens, in the Municipality of Montreal Island, can look at saving money in the budget, but for me in the context of caring for the earth, our mother. I have offered a number of suggestions in the hope that it will stimulate further discussion in the possibility of adopting some or all (wishful thinking!) of these ideas.

D. Ecoficales

1. Greater and sincere consultation with the community from Kahnawà:ke. Montreal has an Indigenous Commission and we are living on unceded Indigenous territory.

2. We must adopt a green policy and I wholeheartedly support the Charter as devised by the Green Coalition with the following ideas for this. Please see (included): 'Green Charter deserves municipal support 'Montreal Gazette 7th May 2019

Why? With the recent findings by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and in light of increasing populations to urban environments such as Montreal, it is more vital than ever to do whatever it takes to reduce both our individual and collective environmental footprint. Hence my focus specifically on this part of the budget.

The urgency of the call from IPBES is nothing short of a declaration of war, a war against ourselves and our transgressions against nature. In times of war, new demands are placed upon the population to work in ways that we may not like, but what choice do we have when we are faced with the collapse of our ecosystem? Worse still, one that seems to be accelerating, where it has been noted by the IPBES, that for example, *'species loss is accelerating to a rate tens of hundreds of times faster than in the past'* (reported in the Motreal Gazette 'Million Species at Danger: Report 7/5/19).

Montreal is no exception to this because there is a noticeable increase in the construction of high-rise, high density condos and in the process, the fragmenting of what little green spaces that are left here on the island. Can we afford to approach urban planning where conservation of green spaces are done in piecemeal ways because private and rich developers can shape these private spaces yet have far-reaching consequences to what is a livable city. How the public sphere is impacted by these private buildings – despite municipal controls. How can we have win-win situations where the tension between the public and private spaces can be resolved in the context of mitigating greenhouse gases and in protecting what is left of green spaces before they too are fragmented and become tokenised?

A perfect example of this fragmentation and loss of precious habitat is the Technoparc where the REM, which is supposed to be a green project, but has destroyed a considerable amount of land that supports valuable bird habitat and green spaces (see: <http://pqspb.org/downloads/conservation-technoparc/bpq-report-Technoparc-EcoCampus-9192016.pdf>). Why has 20 hectares of greenspace been sacrificed for this green public transport project? (<https://globalnews.ca/news/4516591/pointe-claire-rem-station/> and <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/environmental-groups-ask-court-to-stop-rem-construction-at-saint-laurent-technoparc-1.4830499>)

Why was this choice made in the planning of the REM? I would have thought that every effort to mitigate any infringement on an area with such a high conservation value would have been protected. But it has not been at all and flies in the face of any credibility of protecting green spaces. Again, think about the imperative of doing so, when we have been warned time and time again about the fragility of our environments and impending collapse. What confidence could I as a citizen have when these kinds of decision are being made to ensure that Montreal is a livable city but at the cost of destroying fragile green spaces on the island?

The Technoparc has land that is for sale for ‘development’.
<https://www.technoparc.com/en/land-development-2/> But at the end of the day, when does ‘development’ and profit over green spaces (as infrastructure to support livable cities) end? In fact, what does it mean to live in a liveable city?
(<https://montrealgazette.com/life/what-does-vienna-have-that-montreal-doesnt>) What do we actually want for ourselves and how can we mitigate climate disaster with continued increase in population whilst business as usual approaches continue? Example, have cars really diminished in use or as urban sprawl grows out from the city centre, has car use multiplied and dominate?

What is important for me is that citizens have a chance to be part of the dialogue to find solutions together because really we are in a state of war – one that is about the deterioration of our environment, and we are in many ways still asleep at the wheel because it is still ‘business’ as usual.

Therefore:

1. To ensure that Montreal Island secures 17% green space – to do a proper inventory of public green spaces (whether it is under Federal, Provincial or Municipal) and its categories i.e swamps, forests, parks, sports grounds etc.
2. Green spaces will ensure the wellbeing of the people. Imagine the amount of money saved with happier citizens who have access to green spaces: diminishes the burden on health services – i.e mental health and/or physical ailments. i.e obesity or diabetes.
3. Green spaces and trees will mitigate the impact of urban heat islands, more trees in streets: Concordia University has just finished research on how to mitigate heat islands and proposes that we must have no less than 40% tree cover to do so. There are many streets without trees and this must be immediately remedied. (Please see ‘City Trees can offset neighbourhood heat islands, Concordia researcher says’ Patrick Lejteyi 25/4/19 <https://www.concordia.ca/news/stories/2019/04/25/city-trees-can-offset-neighbourhood-heat-island-effects-researcher-says.html?c=/news/archive>).
4. Widen footpaths so that more green spaces can be accommodated. i.e vertical or horizontal gardens that are done by the community in consultation with the ville.
5. Identifying community groups and organising a directory of these groups which can be updated on the municipal website.
6. More direct involvement of the community and/or existing community groups in greening both traditional and non-traditional public spaces.
7. Making accessible for these groups to consultate with the Ville and their bureaucratic experts on how to oversee greening ideas via regulations etc. vertical walls on streets, parks etc. Special guest speakers etc. knowledge sharing and
8. To have shared resources ie shovels, rakes etc -common garden implements to be used. Coordinating body to oversee this. i.e To have a tools lending library.
9. Seriously consider state of art recycling concepts. Please see ‘Plastic pollution and the technology to beat it’ 25/3/19 <https://ecosuck.org/plastic-pollution-and-the-technology-to-beat-it-news-the-university-of-sydney/> This is cheaper to run!
10. Putting a tax on single use packaging – from take away cups etc to packing found on supermarket shelves. The tax is to pay for the amount of litter on the streets
11. To have a conscription of citizens for clean-ups, twice a year x 3 hours. To have a coordinator (eco quartier for example to manage this). Yearly notice to all households re: where and when and who to contact.
12. To raise greater awareness about littering/great environmental ideas through community-arts based projects.

13..Greater control of new constructions by mandating that green spaces such as walls and roofs are included in the design. Retrofitted in older buildings

14. To have a program to install solar panels – possible partnership with Federal, Provincial to subsidise these

15. The city to have information workshops for entrepreneurs as to how to install these and to create/support local boutique green businesses.

16. Schools to work more closely with Ecocentres or Sentier Jardens, and to establish a downtown garden that can be accessed by students to work on as part of environmental studies.

14. More downtown streets turned into pedestrian malls (to diminish pollution and greenhouse gases).

15. To change streets lights to stop light pollution. RE: Dark Sky - <http://www.darksky.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/MontMegantic-IDSr-2017-annual-report.pdf>

<https://www.hcn.org/articles/western-cities-cut-light-pollution>

16. Adopt a tree (to care for)

17. Scrap the REM. As a citizen, I would like to know how much money the Ville de Montreal will have to pay for this? Is this money spent the best deal for us in terms of public transit?

How much will this project end up costing the citizens via the Municipality. It is already costing the city \$100,000,000 per annum, and for what? (wouldn't it be cheaper to buy a car for each person?) What will the final cost will be? Does this include extras?

Will the REM project impede on green spaces by contributing to urban sprawl? I have heard that there will be 40 storey buildings built next to the REM line which leads me to believe that this privately owned company CDPQ Infra is using the REM for its own personal gain. How did this happen that a major transport project is not being done by the government and instead CDPQ Infra has been given the red carpet, green light to control public money like this? As a citizen, and looking at the budget, I would like concrete answer about the final cost of this project. Otherwise from my point of view, the REM is a super costly green-washing real estate venture. What are we, the citizen, getting from this?