



**Chambre de commerce  
du Montréal métropolitain**  
**Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal**

February 22, 2005

Mr. Thomas J. Mulcair  
Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks  
Direction du patrimoine écologique et du développement durable  
Ministère du Développement durable et des Parcs  
Marie-Guyart Building, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
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**Subject:        Opinion of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal with respect to  
the consultation paper on the Quebec Sustainable Development Plan**

Dear Minister,

It was with great interest that the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal read the consultation paper on the Quebec Sustainable Development Plan and the draft legislation on sustainable development. We are therefore pleased, with this letter, to advise you of our general comments on the consultation paper and the issues that our organization would like to see considered during the preparation of the sustainable development strategy.

The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal has some 7,000 members from the Greater Montreal area business community. Its mission is to analyze and understand economic issues and take appropriate action on behalf of the region. To this end, it supports the growth of its member businesses through a complete range of services and introduces ideas and proposals that promote the economic development of Greater Montreal: the 110,000 businesses and 1.8 million workers who contribute to Metropolitan Montreal's leading role in Quebec's economic development.

**Making sustainable development a Quebec priority: a necessity for the economic competitiveness of the metropolis and Quebec**

The Board of Trade congratulates the government on its commitment to launch a new era of development in Quebec: "economic development that is not to the detriment, but rather to the benefit of our environmental heritage and individual growth." The need to find a balance between economic activity and the improvement of the environment and quality of life is keenly understood by the Board of Trade. While the metropolis is carving out a place for itself in the knowledge economy, quality of life, of place, and of the environment play a strategic role in the competitiveness and appeal of Montreal's economy. The emphasis now placed on innovation and creativity underscores the fact that an economy's greatest asset is the people who participate in it. Their knowledge, experience and skills allow for today's productivity and produce tomorrow's innovations – and this is as true in the high technology sectors as in the so-called traditional domains.

This awareness of the economic importance of individuals and their talent also means being aware of the factors that attract and encourage them to remain here. In the age of globalization, workers are increasingly mobile. At the same time, Quebec is facing a demographic slowdown and a lack of skilled labour. In fact, it is currently estimated that by 2016, the net growth in Montreal's workforce will depend entirely upon immigration. Under these conditions, offering an attractive environment and an exceptional quality of life is nothing less than a necessity for Montreal and Quebec.

For this reason, the Board of Trade is surprised by the comparatively dominant North American perspective described at the beginning of the consultation paper. In our opinion, just as the competition to attract top talent is global, so should the regions that Quebec compares itself with in terms of sustainable development reach beyond the Canadian provinces and the United States.

### **A rigorous and promising effort**

The government's commitment to sustainable development appears, from the perspective of the Board of Trade, to be a rigorous effort capable of generating concrete action. The steps designed to spur the initial actions prompted by the sustainable development strategy have been explained clearly and according to a precise timetable. To maintain credibility in terms of its commitment, it is also important that the government respect the parameters it has set out in its consultation paper.

The second component of the effort meriting emphasis is the inclusion of mechanisms to obtain citizens' comments on the strategy's process and content. In this regard, the Board of Trade hopes that this spirit of openness will continue to define the effort until its conclusion.

Another aspect that the Board of Trade is particularly interested in is the inclusion of mechanisms for feedback and the evaluation of results, such as the appointment of a sustainable development commissioner and the development of indicators to measure progress. A real threat to any sustainable development strategy is the risk of its paying mere lip service to the cause. With its commitment to implement concrete means to evaluate, on an objective and credible basis, the extent to which its sustainable development objectives are being met, the government appears to be taking steps to avoid this pitfall. Moreover, the establishment of numeric measures and the identification of specific objectives for these measures could be particularly useful in raising awareness among Quebecers and gaining their support for the implementation of the sustainable development plan.

### **Recognizing *urban* development as an essential component of the sustainable development strategy**

Inasmuch as the process at the core of the sustainable development plan includes many elements to assure rigour, the Board of Trade believes that the component currently requiring the most attention is the actual content of the sustainable development strategy. It is here that the orientations and priorities will be detailed, and these in turn will trigger the government's "action priorities."

The consultation paper, rather than specifically identifying or proposing certain orientations to include in the strategy, limits itself to stating the "desired characteristics" of the upcoming orientations. Having read these orientations, the Board of Trade believes it important to present a few of its most pressing concerns as part of the current consultation exercise.

The Board of Trade agrees completely that the strategy's orientations and priorities must correspond to the "essential missions of the State," as put forward in the consultation paper. However, the strategy components do not correspond to the government's action priorities as

defined in its document *Shine Among the Best*. In fact, this proposal, which would at first glance seem to be consistent with the strategy, is that which raises the greatest concern for the Board of Trade.

Overall, the Board of Trade is disappointed with the lack of focus accorded to metropolitan Montreal in *Shine Among the Best*. While the government is clearly committed to developing all regions of Quebec and promoting an inclusive Quebec, the absence of a specific approach for Montreal and its metropolitan region – the driving force in Quebec's economy – raises questions as to the government's willingness to recognize the considerable needs of a true metropolis. And while *Shine Among the Best* cites *rural* development as a priority for action, the *urban* environment of Montreal and its surrounding region is not even mentioned.

This lack of consideration for the urban component is of particular concern to the Board of Trade in the ongoing drafting of the sustainable development strategy. Indeed, we are certain that sustainable *urban* development is vital to the success of the government's strategy.

### ***Quality of urban life***

The consultation paper identifies *quality of life* as the ultimate objective of sustainable development, specifying that this component is linked to our environment, lifestyle and standard of living. It goes without saying that the interaction among these three aspects is driven by profoundly different dynamics, depending on whether one is living in a highly urbanized area or at a distance from major cities. Within an urban setting, this interaction takes on a surprising level of complexity, which in our opinion makes it all the more necessary that particular and primary consideration be given to the development of sustainable urban development in the government's plan.

The emission of greenhouse gas (GHG) in metropolitan Montreal is a striking example of the specific challenges facing urban centres, related to balancing environment, lifestyle, and standard of living. Almost half the population of Quebec lives in the metropolitan Montreal area. This concentration of economic and human activity alone poses problems of a unique dimension. Traffic congestion in Montreal, for example, is unequalled anywhere else in Quebec. In addition to lengthening travel times, this congestion also increases the quantity of GHG emissions.

The impact of this situation on the environment is probably the easiest to see and measure; Montreal and, to a lesser extent, Quebec City and Hull, are the only cities in Quebec to experience smog episodes. The impact of heavy traffic on lifestyle and standard of living is less dramatic, but just as tangible: from the time spent travelling to the difficulties of balancing work and family life; from the economic costs of congestion to their impact on public health; from the appeal of a higher environmental quality on the outskirts of the city to the costs of urban sprawl. In metropolitan Montreal, the comprehensive, exhaustive approach needed for a sustainable development plan is, in itself, a major intellectual challenge.

And this is just one example: the sustainable consumption of water and energy, waste management, the use of public transit, and urban revitalization and densification are all issues of particular significance in Quebec's largest urban centres. Thus, for the very credibility of Quebec's sustainable development plan, **the Board of Trade considers that sustainable urban development should necessarily be seen as a priority basis for action.**

More importantly, sustainable *urban* development must be approached as an aggregate rather than on the basis of regional administrative territories as we currently know them. In our day-to-day lives, economic and human activity extends beyond the borders of "Region 06;" sustainable urban development of the metropolis will likewise require the government to reach beyond administrative boundaries and plan in terms of the greater metropolitan region, as defined by the metropolitan Montreal territory.

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While sustainable development of the metropolis is essential for the overall sustainable development of Quebec, it also holds true that a solid sustainable development strategy is particularly important for the competitiveness and prosperity of the metropolis. As the primary hub for investment and, above all, skills in Quebec, Montreal understands the value of environmental quality and exceptional quality of life. The region's business community is also ready to commit to this course of action.

In this message to the government, The Board of Trade wishes to stress the necessity of including sustainable *urban* development in Quebec's sustainable development plan. As is true with the economic development of the metropolis, the sustainable development of Montreal is much too important an issue for Quebec not to make it a clearly stated priority.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Isabelle Hudon'.

Isabelle Hudon  
President and chief executive officer