



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

December 22, 2004

The Honourable Jean J. Charest
Premier of Quebec
Honoré-Mercier Building
835 René-Lévesque Blvd. East, 3rd floor
Quebec City, Quebec
G1A 1B4

Dear Mr. Premier:

On behalf of the some 7,000 members of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal, I would like to inform you of some of our concerns regarding the future of Quebec's domestic help social economy businesses. In fact, in light of information sent to us, in particular by the *Chantier de l'économie sociale* and the *Conseil de la coopération du Québec*, the Board of Trade fears that the long-term viability of these companies is threatened.

Since 1997, the government program offering financial assistance to people using domestic help services has made possible the founding of more than one hundred companies of this type and enabled them to efficiently play an economic and social role of surprising magnitude. These companies have thus made a tangible contribution to the vitality and social cohesion of their communities – elements that, as stressed by the Board of Trade in its *Policy Statement*, promote quality of life and economic development.

These domestic help social economy companies have created a total of 6,000 jobs. For many of their employees, these jobs have provided a good way to enter the job market for the first time or to reintegrate it. The training and supervision offered by these companies have also ensured that these steps will lead to long-term employment. Given the situation now facing Montreal, these efforts have thus had a particularly beneficial impact on the integration of many immigrants into the job market.

The some six million hours of service provided annually by domestic help social economy companies also have an impact far beyond that of simple household maintenance. A significant percentage of the clients of these businesses are over 65. The offer of affordable services – delivered in coordination and in association with CLSCs when necessary – also plays a tangible role in facilitating the home life of this significant component of the population. In addition to having great value for senior citizens, the help offered is also a low-cost way for the government to deliver services needed by those who are in poor health or in danger of losing their independence.

Finally, non-profit organizations and co-ops serve as important vehicles for promoting the involvement of individuals concerned about the well-being of their community. These social

economy companies provide many people with valuable experience in civic and community involvement which, in turn contributes to the vitality of their communities.

For all these reasons, it seems to us important that the actions of domestic help social economy companies receive adequate support from the Quebec government over the long term. The Board of Trade therefore believes it appropriate to provide the conditions necessary for the consolidation and development of these companies.

We hope the decisions made by your government will enable domestic help social economy companies to pursue their important mission.

With highest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Labonté', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Benoit Labonté
President and CEO

*c.c. Chantier de l'économie sociale
Conseil de la coopération du Québec*