



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

Please note that this is a translation of the letter sent to the Premier.

May 16, 2002

Mr. Bernard Landry
Premier of Quebec
Office of the Premier
Édifice Honoré-Mercier
835 Boulevard René-Lévesque Est, 3e étage
Québec (Québec) G1A 1B4

Dear Premier Landry:

The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal wishes to inform you of its official position regarding the construction projects for the two Montreal teaching hospitals affiliated with the faculties of medicine of the Université de Montréal and McGill University.

First of all, the Board of Trade would like to stress its support for the construction projects for the new Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal (CHUM) and the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) and urge the Quebec government to commit firmly to proceeding quickly with their completion.

In general, the Board of Trade sees in this investment all the characteristics of what is commonly referred to as a structuring catalyst project. These new world-class research infrastructures could stimulate the development of Montreal:

- by training top-calibre health-care professionals;
- by contributing significantly to the ability of the two universities and companies in their orbit to train, attract, and, above all, retain talent;
- by making it possible to continue to offer all Quebecers specialized care that is among the best in the world.

Beneficial spin-offs for Greater Montreal

Montreal, the only Canadian city with two faculties of medicine, boasts the highest concentration of medical research in the country. This undeniable comparative advantage must be not only maintained but also strengthened. Construction of the CHUM and the MUHC would meet this need.

In addition, by promoting the development of the two Montreal faculties of medicine through its investment in the construction of the CHUM and the MUHC, the Quebec government would create a growth centre for companies, research funds, professionals, researchers, and foreign

students. This would favour the international prestige of each institution and stimulate innovation in the health-care sector. The two hospitals would also position Montreal among the most dynamic and innovative science cities in the world in terms of science, while helping to make it a destination of first choice for private investors in this sector as well as top-calibre scientists and researchers. Finally, these projects could promote the rapid growth of the biotechnology industry in Greater Montreal as well as that of other high-tech science-based industries connected with the activities of these two hospitals.

The Board of Trade views these two projects as essential to the development and retention, in Montreal, of the specialized skills and technological innovations required for the delivery of high-calibre health care services – among the best in the world – to all Quebecers.

The CHUM and the MUHC would adequately meet the desperate need in Quebec for specialized equipment and the training of health-care professionals able to meet the growing demands of an aging population.

Conditions essential to the success of the two projects

Fast action

These two projects have already been the subject of numerous studies and discussions. The Board of Trade believes the government now has sufficient information at its disposal to make a fast, informed decision regarding the appropriateness and need to move ahead with each of these projects. Despite the difficult context in which the Quebec health-care system is evolving, it is essential that the government rapidly announce its intentions so that the project is not unduly delayed.

Hesitation surrounding the making of this decision in this regard will not only delay the beginning of work on the two projects – both equally important to Montreal – but also will contribute to the loss of many health-care professionals.

Transparency and realism

Transparency, realism and rigour with regard to costs and financing are also essential to the success of the two teaching hospitals. To obtain the support of the public and the business community, it is important for the two teaching hospitals and the government to demonstrate exemplary transparency throughout these major investment projects.

In addition to earning public support, transparency would also ensure the rigor and financial realism of the projects. For example, while the Board of Trade supports the involvement of the private sector in funding the two projects, it nevertheless stresses the importance of realistic objectives and ensuring that new funding campaigns will not drain the financial resources needed for other projects or sectors.

A proactive approach

It is important to place the construction of the two teaching hospitals in the perspective of the health-care network of which they are a part and to maintain a proactive approach with regard to the entire network once their construction is begun. The CHUM and the MUHC hospitals meet very real needs and are thus part of the larger picture of measures that must be taken to maintain and develop Quebec's health-care system. To ensure the beneficial impact of having two training centres of excellence is felt throughout the health-care system, other steps must be taken that will require both political courage and resolve.

We must not forget that if these new health centres respect their primary mission of training, research, and specialized care, additional pressure will be exerted on the rest of the network, which will have to absorb a larger share of the primary care now handled by the university hospitals. Initiatives dealing, among other things, with relieving choked emergency rooms, providing home care services, increasing financial resources, and completing the shift toward ambulatory care will still be necessary, if not essential. It is time to move from treatment to prevention within a mobilizing social project.

In conclusion, the Board of Trade considers it essential that the two teaching hospitals be completed without wasteful overlap and with the most productive synergy. Close cooperation between the CHUM and the MUHC is crucial and, as far as possible, should promote economies of scale. In lending its support to the construction of these two major university teaching hospitals, the Board of Trade also places its various forums at the disposal of the parties involved to ensure the business community and residents of Greater Montreal are kept fully informed and supplied with credible, unbiased and sustained information.

For all of the above reasons, the Board of Trade strongly supports the construction of the two Montreal teaching hospitals. Whether for the direct and indirect economic spin-offs generated by the building of these two university hospitals or the important discoveries that could be made there, the Board of Trade sees this project primarily as an investment in the collective future of Greater Montreal and thus of all Quebec.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Yours truly,



Benoit Labonté
President

c.c. François Legault, ministre d'État à la Santé et aux Services sociaux.
David Levine, ministre délégué à la Santé
Pauline Marois, ministre d'État à l'Économie et aux Finances
André Boisclair, ministre d'État aux Affaires municipales et à la Métropole
Sylvain Simard, ministre d'État à l'Éducation