



Montréal's electors are entitled to fair representation

Montréal, May 12, 2011 – The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal today unveiled its **X = X ?** campaign to raise awareness among the public and Members of the National Assembly about the importance of fair representation of the Montréal area in Quebec's democratic system. The Board of Trade strongly opposes institutionalizing the city's underrepresentation in Quebec politics.

"Current debates on redrawing the electoral map are a denial of electoral justice," said Michel Leblanc, President and CEO of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal. "We are asking elected officials to respect the metropolitan area and its electors. One vote in Montréal, Longueuil, Laval or Sainte-Thérèse must have the same democratic weight as one vote in the regions. The Government of Quebec is dragging its heels in responding to the city's needs. The principle of effective representation of all electors is and must remain the foundation of our democratic system."

"The metropolitan area represents over 50% of the Quebec population and yet has only 54 of the 125 electoral districts, or 42% of them," Mr. Leblanc said. "It's unacceptable and disrespectful to the city's citizens and taxpayers. The government and the official opposition have not put forward any proposals to resolve this situation."

"Introducing a minimum number of electoral districts for each region, with no consideration for the number of electors who live there, or creating two categories of electoral districts, urban and rural, are proposals that would hurt Montréal," Mr. Leblanc said. "Electors in the Montréal area are full citizens of Quebec, and their electoral weight must reflect this reality."

"We need to remember that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has 107 elected officials for a population 50% larger than that of Quebec," Mr. Leblanc said. "Quebec has sufficient parliamentary representation, so redrawing the electoral map should not involve adding new electoral districts, but rather a complete redistribution that takes into account the demographic evolution of Quebec. Montréal Island has already lost electoral districts to reflect population movements; why flout this new rule now?"

As part of this initiative, the Board of Trade released a statement of opinion from Stéphane Beaulac, a constitutional law expert and professor at Université de Montréal's faculty of law. According to this opinion, "the possible gaps in electoral representation following the reforms presented would be unconventional and, consequently, violations of the constitutional guarantees of democratic rights."

"In reading this opinion, it becomes clear that it is the electors, and not the regions, that have a right to representation," Mr. Leblanc said. "If unique geographical realities impose constraints on the electoral map, as is the case for the exceptional divisions in the Magdalen Islands and Northern Quebec, the principle guiding of any redrawing of the map must remain the effective representation of the electors. We assume that all the members from the Montréal area, no matter their party, will care about defending the right of electors to fair democratic representation."

This initiative began on Tuesday with the Board of Trade sending a pair of identical pens, only differing in size, to the 125 Members of the National Assembly, as well as to members of the press gallery. This gesture was intended to show that in exercising their right to vote, the citizens of Quebec are not equal.

For more information, please visit www.inegale.info.

The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal has some 7,000 members. Its primary mission is to represent the interests of the business community of Greater Montréal and to provide individuals, merchants, and businesses of all sizes with a variety of specialized services to help them achieve their full potential in terms of innovation, productivity and competitiveness. The Board of Trade is Quebec's leading private economic development organization.

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