



**Chambre de commerce
du Montréal métropolitain**

Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal

Using Creativity to Drive Montreal's Growth

Brief Presented to the

Office de consultation publique de Montréal

As part of the consultation on the Cultural Development Policy
Proposal for the City of Montreal

By

The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal

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Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal

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 Montreal 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.

Introduction

The Board of Trade is very pleased to participate in the consultation of the Office de consultation publique de Montréal (OCPM) concerning the Cultural development policy proposal for the City of Montreal. We recognize the importance of this exercise, which is aimed at giving Montreal a real cultural development strategy, befitting a world-class city.

In this era of globalization, economic competition is increasingly being played out between the major urban centres of the world, which are now considered the real engines of wealth creation and innovation. We therefore believe it has become critically important for cities to create an environment conducive to business development and to offer citizens the best possible quality of life so as to enhance their competitiveness on the world stage and attract and retain talent and investors.

Business people unanimously agree that culture is a big part of our City's vitality. A survey conducted in 2004 and published in the *Montreal Health Report*¹ showed that, for the most part, the business community believes Greater Montreal stands out for its quality of life and that culture plays a big role in shaping this exceptional quality.

In the firm belief that culture contributes to Montreal's visibility, the Board of Trade has spent the past few years focusing on this area. Indeed, its policy statement mentions that "Creativity, cultural vitality, and a strong social fabric all contribute to the quality of life and economic development of the City of Montreal." Moreover, it recently supported the initiative of the Partenariat du Quartier des spectacles, as well as the eighth edition of the Journées de la Culture by transforming its premises into an art gallery. On this occasion, the Board of Trade received some 30 artists who exhibited more than 100 paintings, giving them an opportunity to showcase their work to the many visitors and members of the Board of Trade who attended and thus bring two worlds together.

For years now, our organization has been actively involved in the Prix Arts-Affaires, which recognizes the contribution and support of the business community to Montreal culture. This prize also promotes new models of supporting the arts with a view to encouraging individuals and businesses to get involved in the cultural milieu.

As well, over the past few years, the Board of Trade has welcomed to its forums many key cultural figures, including Kent Nagano, music director of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra; Simon Brault, president of Culture Montréal and executive director of the National Theatre School of Canada; Robert Rabinovitch, president and CEO of the CBC and Société Radio-Canada; Alain Simard, president and CEO of Équipe Spectra; and Guy Laliberté, president and founder of Cirque du Soleil. In addition, on February 22, the Board of Trade will welcome Pierre Curzi, president of Union des artistes.

To prepare this brief, the Board of Trade relied on the involvement and expertise of its strategic analysis committee on social affairs. Over the past few months, this committee held two meetings to analyze the

¹ Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal, *Montreal Health Report*, 2004.

cultural development policy proposal and formulate the recommendations contained in this brief. During this time, the Board of Trade also called on the expertise of the members of its board of directors.

With a view to assuming its role as an involved, responsible economic player, the Board of Trade is pleased to submit its comments and reflections on the Cultural development policy proposal for the City of Montreal. These comments are presented in two parts. In the first, we examine the major role culture plays in the City's economic development. In the second, we delve in greater detail into the challenges facing Montreal and propose various initiatives that will help make culture a true engine of development.

1. Culture as an element of metropolitan competitiveness and development

Although on a smaller scale than the major cultural centres of the world such as Rome, Barcelona and San Francisco, Montreal projects an image and signature abroad that is largely influenced by the vitality of its cultural sector. The renown of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Cirque du soleil, Céline Dion, Denys Arcand's films, the productions of Wajdi Mouawad, the dance company La La Human Steps and the Gesù – Centre de créativité, to name just a few, add much to the prestige of this signature.

Montreal owes this vitality in large part to the exceptional diversity of its artistic disciplines and to the City's myriad cultural organizations and creators, whether the *underground* – emerging or alternative – or large organizations such as museums and concert halls, all of which contribute to our cultural vibrancy.

This bustling culture is largely due to the fact that the City holds major cultural events and festivals that contribute to attract over 7 million people each year to Montreal.² Moreover, the cultural sector generates economic spin-offs of some \$5 billion a year and 90,000 direct and indirect jobs.³ Consequently, culture plays a big role in the City's economic development and, in our view, constitutes a true economic lever.

According to a recent study conducted by Statistics Canada, the country's average annual employment growth was 3.4% in the cultural sector, outpacing the economy overall, which advanced 2.3% in 2003.⁴ The report entitled *Montreal, City of Knowledge*,⁵ prepared by Montreal's Advisory Committee, revealed that knowledge workers consider arts and entertainment to be the second most important factor when deciding whether to locate in a large city.

These facts attest to the power of culture as an economic lever. Indeed, as a result of the vitality and excitement it generates, culture is a critically important element in the quality of life citizens and visitors enjoy. And this quality of life plays a large part in **attracting and retaining** talented creative people to the City. Montreal is no different in this regard and must do all it can to improve this quality of life and draw talent, creators and investors so that it can become one of the most dynamic and competitive cities in the world. In this regard, during his recent visit to the Board of Trade forum, Martin Tremblay, president and CEO of Ubisoft, stressed the importance of Montreal's quality of life and cultural vitality for his employees who specialize in creating and producing video games and who chose to come to Montreal rather than another city in North America. Quality of life is a real component of Montreal's competitiveness.

One of the core elements of this competitiveness is precisely the image the City projects on the international scene. In this regard, the Board of Trade commends Montreal's branding initiative aimed at building a brand image for itself like other major cities (such as New York with its "I love New York" slogan and its yellow taxis, or Barcelona with its "Nature and Culture") did a long time ago. Montreal has

² Tourism Montréal, *Le profil-type du visiteur à Montréal en 2002*, March 2004.

³ City of Montreal, *Montreal, Cultural Metropolis*, November 2004.

⁴ Statistics Canada, *Economic Contribution of Culture in Canada*, December 2004.

⁵ Advisory Committee, *Montreal, City of Knowledge*, November 2003.

no choice but to create an image that will reflect its distinctiveness and position it on the world stage. On this matter, it appears that many economic development players in Montreal have taken up the challenge of branding the City. However, we believe the resulting image must be positioned in a cohesive manner, and this means calling on the expertise of various groups such as the City's corporate services, Tourisme Montréal and the Montreal Metropolitan Community (MMC). Lastly, culture must be one of the many elements that make up this brand image. In this respect, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recommends encouraging cultural industries and setting up cooperative initiatives around Montreal's branding or regional identity strategy.⁶

In our view, Montreal's cultural vitality is a key aspect of its quality of life. It contributes extensively to Greater Montreal's economic development and enhances the City's international competitiveness. Moreover, we think cultural vitality is an important factor in attracting talent and creators as well as an element that encourages innovation and creativity. Greater Montreal already possesses major assets but we believe it needs to **better structure and organize** this added value.

Faced with other cities of the world that are displaying immense ingenuity and that are structuring and organizing themselves, we must harness all our creativity to find lasting solutions to the funding problem pertaining to cultural events and organizations. The City of Montreal, through, among others, the Conseil des arts de Montréal, must entrench the enviable place culture holds in the City's economic development if it hopes to join the ranks of the major cultural cities of the world. In this regard, it is interesting to note that Montreal's annual investment in cultural development is \$65 per capita.⁷ While this amount is higher than many cities in North America, it lags far behind the amounts spent by the largest cultural cities. By implementing a cultural policy, Montreal is giving itself important cultural development tools. However, it bears mentioning that other cities are investing far more; for example, San Francisco spends \$167 per capita⁸ on cultural development.

2. Exporting our creations and attracting creators

Known for its cultural effervescence, Montreal is a creative centre of excellence. According to a recent study conducted by Richard Florida, 32% of the jobs in the city are related to the "creative" sector, an element that helped make Montreal the second most creative city in North America.⁹ The City boasts many institutions that work to develop culture, for example, the Conseil des arts de la Ville de Montréal, the Maisons de la culture and the network of widely used libraries, which allows it to reach a large segment of the population and promote culture in its various forms of expression.

However, we believe it is important to set up an environment that will not only attract creators to Montreal but also make those we have want to stay, rather than leave for other cities with better cultural development conditions. Let us focus on exporting our creations and keeping our creative talent here at home.

In this regard, the leadership role Montreal has adopted in terms of cultural development (pledge 37) is critical. Although the City may have decided to lead the development of Montreal's culture, it clearly does not have the financial means of its ambitions or those of its many creators. For this reason, we believe that the MMC and the provincial and federal governments must be called upon to actively participate in developing Quebec's primary cultural engine, and this is where the City can play a key role.

⁶ OECD, *OECD Territorial Reviews – Montreal, Canada*, 2004.

⁷ City of Montreal, *Montreal, Cultural Metropolis*, November 2004

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ The Richard Florida Creativity Action Team, *Montreal's Capacity for Creative Convergence: Outlook and Opportunities*, 2005.

In our view, to assume this role, the City must, much like the creators it plans to help, demonstrate a lot of creativity. It bears mentioning that one of the core missions of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Culture Organization, which named Montreal the World Book Capital for 2005, is specifically to encourage creativity “which draws its force from social and economic institutions that stimulate market activity and innovation.”

The Board of Trade has identified three forms of creativity that merit special attention. First, the creativity of our City’s creators and artists must be fostered and supported, both locally and internationally. Second, we believe that the cultural development players, in particular the City of Montreal, must use creativity to implement the most relevant initiatives to promote culture and find adequate means of funding. Lastly, the business community, for which the City’s cultural vitality translates into a better economic environment, must itself find innovative ways to support creators and artists.

Pledges to prioritizing

Of the 45 pledges in the Policy Proposal, we believe that a number should be prioritized by all the cultural development stakeholders in order to energize this sector and ensure lasting development.

- The City pledges “to promote, together with its partners – the MMC and the government of Quebec and Canada – the development of a new approach for funding Montreal’s major cultural institutions” (pledge 21). This pooling of resources appears to be a sound approach to setting up large cultural institutions. However, in developing this new way of funding, the Board of Trade would like to encourage the City not to overlook the major contribution the private sector can make.

Indeed, many businesses already work in the cultural sector and have acquired extensive know-how. Such is the case of companies specialized in ticket sales and event organization and promotion. These companies would certainly contribute to the success of innovative and structuring projects for Montreal and the metropolitan region.

- With regards to the Partenariat du Quartier des spectacles, which is a “strategic priority” for the City and part of pledge 27, this is indeed a structuring project. Keeping artists in the square of the Quartier des spectacles by making space available to them for their work and creations and redeveloping certain sectors in this area are elements that will ensure the visibility and vitality of this pivotal creative district of Montreal.

After the fashion of what has been done in the Quartier international de Montréal, and the promotion of public works of art, certain core projects such as the redevelopment of the Place des festivals (pledge 24) would allow the redevelopment of certain destructured areas. In this regard, we believe the City should immediately launch some of these projects involving the Quartier des spectacles to encourage the stakeholders in this area as well as the organizations located close to the square to take part in the project. For example, the City could start with the “vitrine culturelle” project to which it has given its “support” (pledge 11). In our view, this project should be carried out as soon as the Quartier des spectacles gets off the ground in order to structure and promote the Montreal cultural offering and to make the many cultural products offered daily across Montreal more accessible to residents and tourists alike.

- Film and television productions generate major economic spin-offs for Montreal and the metropolitan region. The Board of Trade supports the City’s efforts to set up a structured and coherent movie and audiovisual industry development plan (pledge 26) and was very pleased with the Quebec government’s recent announcement to increase the tax credit from 11% to 20% for film production services, most of which are produced in Greater Montreal.

- We are also pleased to see that the City of Montreal administration kept the promise it made in 2000 and increased the budget of the Conseil des arts de Montréal to \$10 million annually (pledge 18) and that the elected officials have pledged to convince the MMC to provide funding for metropolitan cultural institutions and festivals (pledge 39).
- The Board of Trade supports the City's pledge to integrate into its urban development policies and interventions an unflagging concern for harmony, pursuit of quality and appreciation of culture and heritage (pledge 13). For the Board of Trade, this element will help shape the City's image and promote it as a cultural metropolis.
- We commend the City for pledging to create a Montreal advisory council on culture (pledge 36). We suggest that this body endeavour to set quantified success objectives for the Cultural policy, which would provide the Administration with a means of tracking the Policy's implementation. In our view, these objectives should be easily accessible and could consist of, for example, the total amount invested per capita in the cultural sphere, the number of library books available and borrowed per capita and the number of admissions to cultural centres and private cultural institutions.
- Lastly, another important aspect of Montreal's international image is the knowledge acquired in urban design and public art by Montreal creators (pledge 14). The recent development of the Quartier international de Montréal and the urban furniture that so brilliantly characterizes it is unquestionably one of the achievements that will allow Montreal to take its place beside the major cities of the world (pledge 15). Indeed, the Quartier international has won a number of international awards for its design and has become a model to follow.

Creative initiatives to put forward

Besides these important pledges the City has made in its policy proposal and that the Board of Trade considers a priority, a number of additional initiatives could be put forward to encourage the private sector to fund cultural institutions in Montreal and the metropolitan area. Aimed at bringing the business and cultural milieus closer together, the following original initiatives could be used to implement the City's Policy.

- The Board of Trade would like to help the City make the private sector understand how important it is to back cultural institutions and artists in order to ensure Montreal's cultural vitality. We believe that businesses should adopt cultural patronage as a corporate value, in the same manner as some companies implement measures to strike a work-home balance or to reduce waste.
- We suggest creating an investment fund for artists and emerging companies that could be spearheaded by the Conseil des arts de Montréal. This initiative would facilitate their development and integration in the cultural milieu. To set up such a fund, the Board of Trade suggests exploring the possibility of creating joint programs that incorporate initiatives already undertaken by organizations working in the field. The Société de développement des entreprises culturelles (SODEC), the Financière des entreprises culturelles (FIDEC), and the numerous federal government programs are all entities that could, based on their means, financially contribute to developing Montreal's cultural succession together with the Conseil des arts de Montréal.

In our view, there are many benefits to such joint programs, which would make it possible to support the next generation of artists at a reduced financial risk as well as create a real incentive for the higher levels of government to participate in these projects and back them financially.

- The Board of Trade approves the idea of creating a “forum of reflection and action” that would bring together the business and cultural communities and that could be held under the auspices of the Conseil des arts de Montréal. This body could, for instance, offer mentoring services to cultural organizations by providing access to experienced managers from the business community to help them with decision-making and the search for funding. It could also favour networking between the business and cultural communities by having business people sit on the boards of cultural organizations and vice versa, by encouraging companies to invite people from the cultural industry to sit on their board. This type of networking would, in our view, lead to beneficial business relations between these two areas where opportunities for rapprochement are all too few today.
- We consider the City’s plan to offer businesses “cultural menus” or “packages” an excellent way to promote Montreal’s cultural productions and help support cultural institutions and organizations. These menus purchased at the beginning of the season could consist of plays, shows and admission to exhibitions that companies could buy and offer their employees or clients. They could also include shows for children, thus making them family oriented and a means of introducing children to the various forms of artistic expression.
- In addition, the Board of Trade suggests exploring the possibility of implementing federal and provincial tax measures aimed at businesses and individuals alike to promote the acquisition of works of art. England, through its Arts Council, has already implemented a similar program, known as OwnArt, which grants individuals interest-free loans to acquire works of art. Implementing such a program would increase the support to the artists of the metropolis and help budding artists make a name for themselves, as well as increasing the number of public works of art on the metropolitan territory when they can be exposed outdoors.
- Finally, the City, with the backing of the various levels of government, could help organize exhibitions of corporate art collections, which could be shown either at the owner’s premises, in museums, art galleries or cultural centres. Moreover, through its travelling exhibition program that makes the rounds of the various cultural centres on the island of Montreal, the Conseil des arts de Montréal could include collections belonging to private companies. In our view, such initiatives are excellent ways to back emerging artists and introduce them to new audiences.

Conclusion

We believe that cultural vitality makes a significant contribution to a city's prosperity and competitiveness. This vitality nurtures quality of life, which in turn helps attract and retain talent. Montreal is no different and has the advantage of already possessing major assets and recognition in the sphere of cultural development. For the Board of Trade, the Cultural development policy for the City of Montreal is a milestone that will help develop Montreal's culture and promote the City as one of the most dynamic in the world.

Given that many parties are involved in applying the Policy, we believe that defining quantified success objectives is the best way to ensure the pledges are implemented.

Although the various levels of government already make substantial investments in this area, there is no denying that it will take substantially more for this sector to truly take flight. However, in light of the precarious state of the government's financial resources, the Board of Trade believes that Montreal's cultural industry will only advance if commitments are prioritized and innovative means of funding found. In this regard, we believe that the City's ability to assume a leadership role and pool the resources from the MMC and the various levels of government will be instrumental in giving Montreal the levers it needs to become a truly international cultural metropolis.

Lastly, the Board of Trade would like to inform the City of its intention to play a major, responsible and contributory role and would like to work closely with the stakeholders to promote the initiatives and concrete core projects associated with Montreal's cultural development. We reiterate our intention to help the City of Montreal with its effort to persuade the private sector to add cultural patronage to its corporate values. Montreal is already informally recognized as a cultural metropolis; let's do what it takes to make this signature official.