

November 21, 2007

Mr. Claude Fabien  
Committee chair  
Office de la consultation publique de Montréal  
Cours Mont-Royal  
1550 Metcalfe Street, Suite 1414  
Montréal, Quebec H3A 1X6

**Subject: Opinion of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal within the context of the consultation concerning the redevelopment of the former Viger station and hotel**

Dear Mr. Fabien:

The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal was interested to learn of plans to redevelop the former Viger station and hotel and is pleased to transmit its comments regarding this initiative of importance to Montréal.

The Board of Trade has some 7,000 members from the Greater Montréal business community. Its mission is to analyze and understand economic issues and to lead and support appropriate initiatives in the field. It also supports the growth of its members' businesses with a full range of services and proposes ideas promoting the full and healthy development of the metropolis, the 110,000 companies located here, and the 1.8 million workers who make it the economic engine of Quebec.

First of all, the Board of Trade wishes to acknowledge the excellent groundwork laid for this project with regard not only to its intrinsic qualities but also to the quality and relevance of the documents produced. The redevelopment proposal places great importance on the integration of the project within its environment, and the Board of Trade believes that its analysis within the context of the public consultation should take this into account.

In addition, the Board of Trade believes that guiding principles should be established for any development project to create guidelines and maximize the project's benefits for the metropolis, and these guiding principles should include **high-quality sustainable urban development** and **wealth creation**.

It is within this context and with a view to assuming its role as an involved, responsible economic player that the Board of Trade submits the following comments and recommendations:

## **1. High-quality sustainable urban development**

In addition to being a major initiative to enhance Montréal's architectural heritage, the project to refurbish and redevelop the former Viger station and hotel is also a far-reaching development project. For Montréal, it is a unique project. In addition to its location near downtown Montréal in a sector already equipped with major urban and transportation infrastructures – which promote the densification of urban areas –, the project incorporates some buildings meeting the sustainable development standards of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED).

It is also interesting to note that several important projects, including the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal (CHUM) and the Ville-Marie Technopole, along with many residential development projects, are currently being carried out near the site in question and it is within this specific context – the redevelopment and requalification of an entire sector of the city – that this project should be studied. The Board of Trade also observes that insofar as the area east of the downtown core is relatively isolated and unlikely to attract investors, this project will tend to improve the urban fabric and promote its spatial, social, and economic continuity. This is all the more significant in that the area in question is the eastern gateway to Montreal's harbour front, a sector whose improvement is particularly important to the Board of Trade. In this regard, in addition to increasing the mobility of visitors to this entire sector, the tramway that is to cross downtown from east to west, passing through Old Montréal and by the former Viger station and hotel, will serve as an additional development tool for this new pole.

In addition, the project is located across from Viger Square, one of the most imposing squares in Montréal and one that has long been neglected and would benefit greatly from upgrading. This green space takes up three city blocks and, in its current state, contributes to the isolation of the former Viger station and hotel. These two heritage sites should constitute a unique development pole for this entire sector of the city and also serve as a lever for other real estate development projects. In this regard, it appears that the developers of this initiative to rehabilitate the building and redevelop this entire sector on the edges of downtown have taken into account the sector's history and heritage value.

### **Promote wealth creation**

The project to rehabilitate the buildings of the former Viger station and hotel will promote the urban development of Montréal, and its economic spin-offs will also promote growth. The private investments needed to carry out this project are estimated to be \$400 million, making it the largest private real estate venture in Montréal in many years. Over time, the project will thus generate major spin-offs benefiting many economic sectors. In addition, the various government levels will benefit from recurring revenues from the sale of the buildings and the economic activity stimulated by the project. Insofar as these spin-offs will help create wealth in the metropolis, the Board of Trade warmly welcomes this initiative.

In addition to its impact on the development of the metropolis, however, another significant aspect of this project is the increased value of the properties involved as well as of those bordering the Ville-Marie expressway. This is, in fact, a significant aspect of the project, since there are plans to cover the expressway to make land available for future developments. This initiative will finally bridge a gap in the downtown core and enable the City of Montréal to draw tax revenues that are currently unavailable while significantly improving links between downtown and Old Montréal.

In addition, the Board of Trade observes that the developer has made a deliberate choice to design a development with a mix of functions, thereby increasing the project's viability. The

Board of Trade believes this choice will improve the urban fabric of an entire sector east of downtown, revive an important Montréal neighbourhood, and promote the economic development of the entire metropolis. In fact, since the planning for this project has taken into account the impending construction of the CHUM and the Ville-Marie Technopole, the redevelopment of the former Viger station and hotel will likely play a catalytic role for other development projects in this sector.

Finally, the Board of Trade observes that, through consultations carried out before the first outlines of the project were presented, the developer has taken into account many of the concerns of residents and governments. Since this \$400 million private-sector investment is of great importance to Montréal, every effort should be made to reconcile the interests of all stakeholders while taking into account the economic constraints facing the developer. For this reason, the Board of Trade believes it is important to do everything possible to ensure this project is carried out successfully.

Since quality attracts quality, and this project appears to satisfy the criteria for excellence, the Board of Trade can only hope for its success. Not only will Montréal's urban landscape be improved but the city's economy could also greatly benefit.

Please be assured of the Board of Trade's full co-operation in contributing to the development of the metropolis.

Sincerely,

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

Isabelle Hudon  
President and CEO