

UNLOCKING QUEBEC'S FULL POTENTIAL BY CAPITALIZING ON MONTRÉAL'S STRENGTHS

White paper of the Chamber of Commerce of
Metropolitan Montreal, prepared for Quebec's
44th general election

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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la Chambre de commerce
du Montréal métropolitain



Seizing the Moment

We believe it is urgent to release this white paper as a rallying cry for Montréal and for Quebec.

Urgent, because we are living through a moment whose magnitude exceeds that of the cycles we have known before. The geopolitical map is being redrawn, trade and strategic alliances are being recast, and the rules of the game are shifting at a pace no one anticipated. Amid this movement, windows open and close quickly. Quebec cannot afford to let them slip away.

A rallying cry, because nothing this document proposes will happen without collective mobilization. In every era, the metropolis's great breakthroughs have come from the deliberate convergence of government, institutions, businesses and civil society. We are once again facing such a moment.

Quebec's prosperity is built on the complementarity of its regions, each called upon to give its full measure on the basis of what sets it apart. Montréal holds a distinctive place in that equation. Recognizing the metropolis as a driving force does not mean elevating it above Quebec — it means restoring its role in the service of Quebec.

Our metropolis, despite its solid foundations, has not managed to sustainably consolidate the conditions for its full growth. Quebec's appeal to international talent is under threat. The environment in which our businesses operate has become more burdensome. The downtown area is still awaiting investment commensurate with its role. Major projects are struggling to come to fruition.

A metropolis does not rediscover its ambition by chance. It does so through deliberate choice, through collective mobilization, and at the right moment. We are putting forward strong commitments to that end for the next government. The Chamber will champion them, alongside all those willing to build with us. The time has come to seize this opportunity.

Isabelle Dessureault
President and CEO
Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal

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Unlocking Quebec's Full Potential by Capitalizing on Montréal's Strengths

Quebec is entering an election cycle just as the world order is being rapidly recast. States are reinvesting in industrial policy and value chains are being redrawn. In this context, Quebec has a narrow window of opportunity to assert its position.

An Evolution in Three Acts

Montréal long served as the organizing centre of Canada's economy. It then went through a profound decline, driven by the combined effect of continental, demographic, linguistic and industrial pressures. The past two decades have produced genuine rebounds: an innovation strategy, the Quartier des Spectacles, the REM, the Champlain Bridge. The metropolis knows how to mobilize.

The question that remains open is one of continuity: how do we consolidate the conditions for sustainable growth, rather than lurching from one upswing to the next?

The Strengths That Make Montréal Singular

Montréal's singularity is rooted in distinctive strengths, built intentionally over time:

- World-class French-language and English-language universities
- Industrial clusters with strong sectoral economic anchors
- A position as the French-speaking cultural metropolis of the Americas
- World-class head offices and centres of excellence that drive productivity
- A host city for major international organizations
- First-rate hospitals paired with research centres
- A cultural and sporting metropolis of global reach, propelled by its creativity, its major events and its tourism

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Three Pillars, One Foundation

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Metropolitan dynamism rests on three pillars and one foundation. Businesses, which create value. Talent, which determines the capacity to innovate and grow. The business environment, which either facilitates or hinders investment. These three pillars rest on a foundation of identity that is distinctly Montréal's own: the French language, culture, and openness to the world.

Although Montréal can count on solid foundations, each of these three pillars shows significant vulnerabilities. Businesses struggle to reach the critical mass required to become champions. Talent is trained here, but remains difficult to attract, integrate and retain. The regulatory and tax framework places Quebec at the back of the pack among its peers. And the foundation of identity must be inhabited, defended and celebrated if it is to remain vibrant and distinctive.

Hypercollaboration as a Condition for Success

Quebec's strength lies in the complementarity of its regions. Two value chains illustrate this concretely, though they are not the only ones: the maritime sector — an integrated ecosystem spanning shipbuilding to logistics along a corridor running from Salaberry-de-Valleyfield to Blanc-Sablon; and technology, where innovation links Montréal, Québec City, Sherbrooke and several regional hubs.

These highly productive sectors thrive only through hypercollaboration, and realizing their full potential calls for leadership equal to that reality.

Seven Principles as a Compass

The Chamber held consultations on six priority issues: the business environment, talent, infrastructure, housing, market diversification, and downtown vitality. Seven principles emerged from these consultations. The Chamber puts them forward as a compass for assessing every file and invites the next government to draw upon them.

- 1. Hypercollaboration among regions.**
- 2. Choose a few priorities and stay the course.**
- 3. Judge a framework by its efficiency, never by its intent.**
- 4. Prefer the risk that grows champions over the caution that paralyzes.**
- 5. Make French and openness two strengths that reinforce one another.**
- 6. Draw relentlessly on the best of what is being done here and elsewhere.**
- 7. Reject division and repudiate any discourse that isolates Montréal from the rest of Quebec.**

9 RECOMMENDATIONS, ONE HORIZON: 2030

A Performance Contract for the Next Government

This white paper does not merely set out the business community's expectations. It offers a concrete roadmap to strengthen Quebec's competitiveness and accelerate the development of Greater Montréal. Nine commitments will make it possible to measure the progress achieved by 2030.

–20%	in the regulatory burden imposed on businesses , through a systematic review of requirements, the elimination of duplication, and public accountability.
≥5%	of the value of eligible public procurement devoted to purchasing innovation , so as to make the government a true first customer for solutions developed in Quebec.
100%	of major provincial and municipal infrastructure covered by a consolidated, standardized condition assessment , supported by independently verified data.
10 years	One 10-year agreement for downtown. Adopt an ambitious 10-year agreement dedicated to downtown Montréal as a strategic asset, backed by predictable investment, shared governance, and a target of reducing obstructions associated with major construction sites by 30%.
	Successfully turning our higher education institutions into engines of economic and social development. Convert more of our research excellence into tangible economic benefits and restore Montréal's standing among North America's leading university metropolises.
1 / year	An annual index of international talent needs , to measure labour needs by sector and by region, taking into account reception, French-language integration, settlement capacity, employment outcomes and retention, in order to inform multi-year immigration planning.
10 years	of visibility on energy capacity and projects , through consolidated, regularly updated public information on the evolution of supply and demand, connection capacity and planned investment, together with predictable timelines for project authorization and commissioning.
	Making our culture and creativity a driver of Montréal's ambition. Consolidate Montréal's standing as a world-class cultural metropolis.

Measure. Publish. Be accountable.

These commitments must rest on baseline data, clearly assigned responsibilities and the regular publication of results. That is how the next government will be able to turn ambition into tangible progress for Montréal and for Quebec as a whole.

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6 Nine Recommendations for the Next Legislature

Precise and measurable, they must also be enduring, for nothing that transforms a metropolis is accomplished within a single mandate.

1. Make regulatory and tax relief a national priority.

Position Quebec among Canada's leaders in regulatory relief by cutting the burden on businesses by 20% by 2030, while strengthening the competitiveness of the business environment through a tax system that fosters growth, entrepreneurship, investment and innovation.

2. Turn public contracts into levers for growth and innovation.

Devote at least 5% of the value of eligible procurement to purchasing innovation, and encourage large corporations to become the first customers of our SMEs.

3. Change course on the delivery of major projects and the upkeep of infrastructure.

Tailor delivery models to each project, mobilize institutional capital, and cover 100% of infrastructure with an independently verified condition assessment.

4. Invest in downtown Montréal as a national asset.

Make downtown Montréal a North American benchmark for attractiveness, economic vitality, quality of life and urban governance, through a ten-year agreement that enables transformative projects to be delivered.

5. Reassert Montréal as a global metropolis of knowledge and an innovation hub.

Stabilize the rules governing the admission of international talent, recognize trusted institutions, and convert research into companies that stay here.

6. Meet the demographic challenge through calibrated, predictable admission of international talent.

Base multi-year planning on documented needs, a coordinated integration pathway, and an annual index of international talent needs.

7. Capitalize on Quebec's energy advantage.

Establish public, predictable allocation criteria; treat energy efficiency as a source of growth; and support Quebec companies born of the energy transition.

8. Leverage Montréal's international capital as a growth lever for Quebec.

Retain and attract decision-making centres, and convert the metropolis's networks into markets for businesses in every region.

9. Make the arts, culture, design and heritage engines of metropolitan ambition.

Support institutions and emerging talent, require architectural excellence in public projects, and return vacant public heritage buildings to active use.

Priority Transformative Projects for Greater Montréal by 2030

Greater Montréal's prosperity depends on the successful delivery of transformative projects that can meet current and future economic needs, enhance the region's attractiveness, support the green transition, and strengthen its contribution to Quebec's economy.

The following list identifies transformative projects that the Chamber and its economic partners believe should be completed, advanced, or under construction by 2030 to ensure Greater Montréal's sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous development.

Urban and Economic Development

Redevelopment of the Namur-Hippodrome sector

Redevelopment of the Bridge-Bonaventure sector, including the two planned REM stations in the area

Revitalization and economic redevelopment of Montréal's East End

Major Event, Tourism and Visitor Infrastructure

Modernization of the Palais des congrès de Montréal

Modernization and enhancement of Montréal's Olympic Park and Olympic Stadium

Upgrading of Montréal-Trudeau Airport infrastructure

Modernization and continued development of facilities to ensure the long-term future of Montréal's tennis tournament

Transportation and Logistics Infrastructure

Modernization of Montréal's metro assets

Extension of the Orange Line of the metro to Laval

The Projet structurant de l'Est

The Port of Montréal's new container terminal in Contrecœur and related capacity-maximization initiatives

The Alto high-speed rail project and its integration into the metropolitan transportation network

Strategic Research and Health Infrastructure

Expansion and modernization of Hôpital Maisonneuve-Rosemont

