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Opinion: Montreal on right track with new plan on transit and land use

We must build on this courageous first step toward taking the necessary actions to tackle the climate emergency head-on.

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A train speeds by under the glass murals at McGill métro station. Montreal must continue to push the province for additional transit funding, write Jax Jacobsen of For Our Kids and France Duquette of Mères au front. Photo by Dave Sidaway /Montreal Gazette

The dangerously hot and humid conditions Montrealers felt this

month have rarely been [recorded this early](#) and required teams to be deployed to check on [vulnerable and unhoused](#) people in the city and the elderly struggling with [power outages](#) in seniors' living facilities.

This occurred just as the school year was coming to a close. It is with that in mind and with hope for the future of our children that the Montreal groups For Our Kids and Mères au front, which represent families taking action for climate, strongly support Montreal's [2050 Land Use and Mobility Plan](#), which the city presented this month.

We are excited about the ambition of this plan and applaud the administration for recognizing we are in a [true climate emergency](#). Climate experts worldwide have declared that the world will probably blow past 1.5 degrees of global warming, the path that would have brought the least amount of disruption and destruction. What we need now is more bold policies to protect our families, the most vulnerable members of our communities and our cities from the most severe climate-related impacts.

Climate disruption is already having significant effects on municipal life and will only get worse as carbon levels rise. Public finances will take a beating as [more frequent, intense storms](#) and flooding batter roads and bridges. The Parliamentary Budget Office projects climate change could cut national GDP by [six per cent in the long term](#).

[Crime has been found to increase](#) on hot days, which are [becoming more frequent](#). Climate change also has worrying implications for health, from an increase in heat-related deaths to the emergence of new diseases and a rise in rates of cancers and

asthma, all of which will have an outsized effect on children and vulnerable populations. Extreme heat is responsible for [470 deaths every year in Quebec](#), according to a new study by the Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS).

Montreal's new [plan](#) is a courageous first step toward taking the very necessary actions the city needs to tackle the climate emergency head-on.

Increasing the amount of green spaces, especially in underserved neighbourhoods, will not only help people stay cool during protracted heat waves, improving well-being and stress levels, but also increase rainwater absorption and reduce flooding.

[Plans to expand the métro](#), introduce a tramway and secure more cycling paths are much welcome, not only for the physical benefits of the public and active transport for residents, but also as a way to reduce pollution from transportation, a major source of emissions.

Montreal can and should go even further to support the Société de transport de Montréal (STM) and continue to push the province for additional funding to avoid a [downward spiral](#). [The province must step up](#) with funding to ensure Montrealers continue to have [access to a well-functioning system](#).

We should see this plan not as a fait accompli, but as a solid first step toward making Montreal the eco-city it aims to be.

Temperatures are only going to climb, and neighbourhoods and city streets in all areas need to be as prepared as possible to combat coming heat waves. Future policy must expand the amount of trees and green spaces for city residents. As warm weather persists, [air pollution will become more of a problem](#),

which means Montreal will have to find a way to significantly reduce emissions, most of which come from transportation and motor vehicles.

We want our children to have access to nearby green spaces and to be able to travel safely on foot, by bike or public transit. We want to play outside with them and breathe clean air.

For Our Kids and Mères au front intend to participate in the consultation process for this ambitious plan by lending support and pushing for additional action for our kids. We encourage all Montreal residents to do the same.

Jax Jacobsen is a resident of Outremont and writes on behalf of For Our Kids. France Duquette of Ahuntsic writes on behalf of Mères au front.



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