**For Our Kids Montreal Submission to the**

**Public Consultation on the Montréal Roadmap for a Circular Economy**

**Introduction**

We are a group of families working together for climate justice in Tiohtià:ke (Montréal). We are parents and grandparents who work together at the municipal, provincial, federal and international level to ensure a safe, healthy and just world for our children. In the context of this public consultation on a circular economy for the City of Montreal, we also come to you as consumers, clients, customers, taxpayers and managers of our homes and families.

**Our Suggestions**

We can think of many ways in which Montreal’s economy can be made more circular. However, in the interest of brevity and efficiency, we focus our opinion in four areas that we feel we can speak with authority.

Governance: Regulation & Communication

Business leaders have recognised that incentives are not enough, that government mandates are needed to dislodge old, incumbent systems of supply and demand. We saw with the tragic AirBnB fire in Old Town that the City of Montreal can effectively pressure large companies to change irresponsible behavior. We urge the City of Montreal to use all its resources – especially those related to regulation and communication – to put out the fire that is climate change before it burns down our children’s future. Transitioning to a circular economy is a major step in the right direction – thank you to everyone working toward this goal.

We agree and call on the City of Montreal to use regulation to stop wasteful practices in the business sector. For example, the recently enacted [single-use plastics ban](https://montreal.ca/en/articles/single-use-plastic-what-you-need-to-know-about-legislation-20549) could be extended beyond restaurants and grocery stores to all retail outlets in the city, and appliances and electronics outlets could be required to integrate competitive leasing plans and product repair, refurbishing and recycling into their business plans.

Communication is critically important to the circular economy, and one of the most important messages to convey is that reducing consumption comes before re-using, recycling and increasing material and energy efficiency. One innovative policy the City of Montreal can put in place to discourage overconsumption is a ban on high-carbon advertising on city property. Such an advertising ban would include ads for fossil fuel products, gas-powered vehicles (including oversized cars such as SUVs), flights, and other high-carbon products.

Parallel to this ban, a public awareness campaign about low-carbon alternatives is necessary. The City has tool libraries, car-sharing and zero-waste options that are not used to the extent possible because residents are unfamiliar with them. We suggest a circular economy resource library for residents that would include a directory of circular economy businesses and citizen initiatives. A citizen guide to effective circular economy actions would help them cut through corporate greenwashing and disinformation. Funding participatory art events for children and adults to make creative uses of recycled objects can be another fun and accessible way to engage the public and inform more broadly.

Further, we propose citizen focus groups and a consultation to more fully identify, understand, and address barriers to sustainable circular economy consumption by households. For example, zero-waste stores and practices have increased in popularity, but customers do not enjoy cost savings from reduced packaging. Once barriers have been identified, the City can work to address them through mechanisms like subsidies and other support.

We also support initiatives like the Climate Fresk workshop, which has taught more than one million people the key aspects of the IPCC reports, while another workshop has been developed to teach the [circular economy](https://www.lafresquedeleconomiecirculaire.com/). Focusing on relevant scientific findings, it teaches groups of 4 to 8 participants why circularity is necessary and what it entails.

As homeowners and consumers, we see the construction and renovation sector as a key area for the governmenttouseregulation and communication to facilitate the circular economy. We support boroughs integrating energy efficiency, zero waste, and other ecological considerations into the permitting process. Certain boroughs, such as [Outremont](https://montreal.ca/articles/le-plan-strategique-2021-2025-de-larrondissement-doutremont-14164) and [Saint-Laurent](https://montreal.ca/programmes/subvention-pour-les-renovations-ecoenergetiques), have adopted “green” guidelines, but citizens do not have ready access to detailed information regarding how to tap into the circular economy during home improvement projects. In collaboration with various partners (e.g., provincial and federal), the city is providing financial assistance for such projects, an initiative that needs to be expanded upon to enable all Montreal residents to participate. [[1]](#footnote-1)

We applaud the City’s plans for circularity and a reduction of emissions for businesses and large property owners, evident in this public consultation and in the Feuille de route Vers des bâtiments montréalais zéro émission dès 2040**.** However,as homeowners and tenants, we are eager for the support outlined in Action 28 in the [Plan de Climat (2020-2030)](https://montreal.ca/en/articles/montreal-climate-plan-objective-carbon-neutral-2050-7613) to help us navigate the best course of action to improve our home’s comfort and efficiency. We want easy access to renewable, recycled and sustainable, non-toxic materials and to know which local businesses we can rely on to supply us with these materials.

The role of the private sector is crucial in implementing a circular economy; however, the municipal government should ambitiously embark on introducing the circular economy in our public services and institutions (e.g., water, healthcare and schools) as an example of how this can reduce emissions, waste and decrease costs.

Water

A circular economy approach to water can reduce water consumption from primary resources by 53%, the World Economic Forum found in a 2021 [report](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Imagine_IF_Water-Series_2021.pdf). The world is in the midst of a water scarcity, with 1.42 billion people living in high or extremely high water scarcity.

“Our water consumption over the next 10 years is going to get a lot worse,” Eau Secours executive director Rebecca Petrin said in a CP report, warning “some municipalities will run out of water.”

While 72% of water withdrawals are made by the agricultural industry, the UN has found that municipalities account for 16% of withdrawals, and industry a further 12%. In the City of Montreal, industrial use accounts for [33%](https://portail-m4s.s3.montreal.ca/pdf/bilan_de_lusage_de_leau_2021.pdf) of all water use.

Encouraging the re-use of water is central to circular economies and can be a major contributor to Montreal’s circular economy ambitions. Other municipalities have aggressively tackled water use: Lisbon [uses](https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/Cities100-Lisbon-is-future-proofing-its-water-supply-with-a-recycled-water-programme-and-rain-fed-greenspaces?language=en_US) recycled water more widely for a variety of non-drinking uses, while New York has [implemented](https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/Cities100-In-New-York-City-effective-water-management-cuts-costs-and-carbon-and-boosts-resilience?language=en_US) a programme to replace tens of thousands of inefficient fixtures to limit water waste, as well as launching water efficiency projects in parks, hospitals and schools.

One area where Montreal can improve its water efficiency is by reviewing and augmenting its recently enacted [volume-based pricing for non-residential buildings](https://montreal.ca/en/articles/non-residential-buildings-new-volume-based-pricing-water-consumption-40288) if the Province continues its policy of charging low royalties to industrial groups.[[2]](#footnote-2) Making water more costly will be a major driver for enterprises to adopt water-recycling technologies, make alterations to processes and fix leaky equipment. Used industrial wastewater can be redirected and reused for washing, rinsing, plating, spraying, coating, boiler water make-up, cooling tower make-up, and fire suppression systems.

We also encourage the City to convert to a metered rather than flat billing system for residents to encourage personal responsibility and efficient practices. This will also ensure transparency in how the cost of water is shared across the industrial and residential sectors, which has been shown in the past to favor industry.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Lastly, we encourage the City to capitalize on the success of its Green Alley programs by adopting the “green and blue” approach, which integrates the harvesting of rain and grey water to support the greening of urban spaces.[[4]](#footnote-4) This is a massive opportunity for the City to build on a popular program, while responding to climate change, reducing water related costs and limiting polluted run-off from entering the St Lawrence River.

Healthcare

The healthcare sector emits 4.6% to 5.2% of all greenhouse gas emissions in Canada. Medical institutions can be used as an example of how to decrease GHG emissions and waste, by working with the private sector and led by the municipal and provincial government.

The sector can increase its sustainability by limiting purchases to those with little or no packaging, more selective food sourcing, recycling heat and water, optimising plastics recycling, and quantifying energy recovery.

We can maximize energy recovery by reusing excess heat produced by the cooling and heating of air and water. These recycled materials can be used in airstream heat recovery, where air heated from heating sources, lights, or other processes are captured and reused to heat or cool the building. Hospitals also can use water-to-water heat exchangers, which take heated water from kitchens, laundry, and sterilizing operations to then heat the healthcare facility. New hospitals being built within the city must incorporate these energy recovery technologies; however, plans for the construction of Lachine Hospital at this point in time include none of these energy-saving measures.

Although energy use is the greatest contributor to health care’s environmental footprint, waste is also a significant area of concern. In a 2019 study, less than 9% of what is recyclable is recycled in our health care institutions. Hospitals can improve these rates by hiring managers who are in charge of decreasing emissions and waste, and who focus on purchasing materials with minimal packaging, reintroducing reusable products like kitchen items (e.g., cooking utensils, plates) and introducing wide-scale composting. These actions have been carried out in many Canadian and global healthcare institutions over the last decades with great success.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Food in healthcare institutions is another source of waste and emissions. This includes emissions from delivery to cooking, as well as dumping of unused food into our waste stream as most Montreal institutions have no composting. We have a number of food initiatives including Delipappilles and [Nourish](https://www.nourishleadership.ca/) that already offer local sustainable, locally grown food to a Montreal hospital (i.e., St. Justine) and should be broadly applied to all hospitals to decrease the amount of food waste and supply more nutritious food with less footprint.

Education

There is a need for a radical transformation of the education sector for schools to play their part in tackling the climate and nature crisis. A shift towards the development of sustainable schools – where sustainability is embedded both in environmental education and through operating a zero-waste circular economy in schools and campuses – is crucial.

Environmental education is critical for citizens to understand what is wrong with our current system and why a circular economy is required. However, teachers do not have the extra capacity to design, distribute, and carry out new programs. There is an urgent need to develop a top-down approach led by local authorities, incorporating a strategy with clear responsibilities, funding, training, and measuring tools.

We propose the creation of a Circular Economy Schools Coordinator to be appointed at the municipal level, to connect educators and school administrators within the metropolitan areas with municipal services, social enterprises, ecologically oriented local businesses and (critically) with each other. This Coordinator would be a liaison between the municipal government, local school boards, education department and individual educators to resource and distribute lesson plans related to the Montreal circular economy, support schools in finding engaging programs for students, expand environmental literacy, increase efficiency and reduce waste in the school environment and generally facilitate the integration of schools into Montreal’s circular economy.

To implement a zero-waste circular economy in schools and on campuses, the municipal government needs to tackle several issues. Energy efficiency is key to improving the circular economy in schools. Energy efficient decentralised heat networks need to be created, while retrofit rollouts are pursued. The municipal school system should also consider fitting school buildings with insulation, heat pumps, solar panels, and LED lighting.

Waste management and recycling also needs to be prioritised. Schools and school boards should emphasise the need to borrow, swap, mend, thrift, and make supplies for all activities. Schools should also initiate “reuse schemes” for school uniforms, coats, shoes, soccer gear, and party dress.

A means to encourage wider engagement, programs to teach students, teachers, and the community to “reuse and repair” should be created for old clothes and electronic devices.

Schools should also take pointed action in reducing water use and food waste. Education facilities can be encouraged to improve school catering and make reducing packaging and minimising food waste a top priority.

**Conclusion**

As the risks of climate breakdown become ever more imminent, governments and businesses worldwide must adapt their institutions and systems to the new climate reality. Montreal can further cement its reputation as a world-leading eco-city by going even farther, and transforming its business sector as well as its public services and institutions with an ambitious and far-reaching circular economy plan.

1. <https://montreal.ca/articles/renovations-quoi-faire-avant-pendant-et-apres-vos-travaux-2775>; <https://montreal.ca/articles/la-reduction-de-lutilisation-des-energies-fossiles-un-plus-pour-vos-batiments-8738> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Quebec currently charges between $2.50 per million litres to $70 per million litres, a rate less than Ontario and far less than Italy ($2,000 per million) and Denmark ($10,000). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Minardi, J-F. (2010, May). [The management of water services in Montreal](https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/management-of-water-services-in-montreal.pdf). Alert: Market Solutions to Public Policy Problems. The Fraser Institute. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See <https://www.ruellesbleuesvertes.com/accueil/l-alliance-rbv/> for more information. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. https://greenhealthcare.ca/ghs/ [↑](#footnote-ref-5)