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M. ROBERT HAJALY

LA PRÉSIDENTE :

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J'inviterais maintenant Monsieur Robert Hajaly à nous présenter son mémoire. Alors, à vous la parole.

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Un court rappel des règles. Vous disposez d'une période de dix minutes pour exposer votre opinion. Ensuite, les commissaires disposeront également de dix minutes pour échanger avec vous. Est-ce que vous avez une présentation PowerPoint ou des documents à partager?

M. ROBERT HAJALY:

No. I sent you, I have just a little written brief, I don't... you got it?

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LA PRÉSIDENTE:

Yes, we got it and we read it also. You can begin now. Thank you.

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M. ROBERT HAJALY:

Okay, thanks very much, so good evening everyone. And, you can hear me, I take it right, everything is good?

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LA PRÉSIDENTE:

Yes.

M. ROBERT HAJALY:

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Okay, thank you. What I meant to say is basically just a repetition of the brief. So, you know, since you already know it, basically, I am arguing for two uses of the Royal Victoria site, apart from the bit that goes to McGill, of course.

105 The first use is for social housing, especially for the homeless, but not only for the homeless.

And the second use is to rehabilitate the public swimming pool that was once there and also build a recreational park on the parking lot that is right next to the swimming pool.

110 Okay, now first the social housing. The reason I emphasize this is that we have a great need for social housing in the Western downtown area, Peter-McGill district. According to the census, roughly 40 % of the people living in our district are below the federally defined low income line.

115 I know that it goes against the public view of it as being a rich area. There are rich people, but there are a lot of poor people as well.

120 And on the other side, the rents in our area are among the highest in Montréal. Now, the local community has tried very hard to get some social housing, I should also add that there are a lot of homeless people, partly indigenous, but also others.

Now the local community has tried very hard to get social housing, but we have not had too much success.

125 So, in my view, the redevelopment of the Royal Victoria site provides an opportunity to provide more social housing. And so that's a first thing I am recommending.

Also, of course, align with that, there could be some services, which would be appropriate for people who are living there as well.

130 I also added in my brief the fact that there are a number of buildings that are rehabilitated in this area. There is Hôtel-Dieu, the former building of the institute (inaudible) and the hôpital Misericorde.

135 I know that you are not responsible for that, but what I am asking you to do, what I am suggesting is that you view the development here as part of a possible larger development for social housing that would really make a difference to the situation of the homeless people in Montréal. People talk about it, but not much has been done about it.

140 So, this is a first step that you could initiate, that you could recommend in your recommendations.

145 Okay, so that's the first aspect. The other aspect is the public swimming pool. There used to be a public swimming pool on the site of the Royal Victoria, just behind the Allan Memorial building. It was very popular. It was initially just for the employees of the hospital, but then it was thrown open to the public.

150 It was very popular with the public. It's beautifully sited among the grass and trees and so on. But when the hospital moved, it was closed. So, what I am asking here is that this swimming pool either be rehabilitated, if that's possible, or if necessary, rebuilt.

155 I would like to emphasize that for the Western downtown area, there is no other public outdoor swimming pool. No other. This would be the only outdoor public swimming pool that we could have.

160 So, you can imagine it would be very popular; it was very popular with the local residents. So I am asking that you recommend the redevelopment of the swimming pool.

165 And in addition to that, let me just say that Projet Montréal, the Projet Montréal administration political party in 2017, they promised to do it, because they knew people wanted it. But they have not done it – I am not saying this to blame them. So, obviously, they are aware of it.

170 The other thing that is related to this is that next to the pool, is now a parking lot. It used to be a parking lot for the hospital. And this parking lot could be redeveloped as a kind of outdoor recreational space. In fact, again it was promised by Projet, especially for families.

175 So I am asking... but it was never done. So, I am asking, once again, that you recommend this. Once again, there are very few outdoor recreational spaces for anyone in Peter-McGill and the Western downtown area.

180 So any outdoor recreational space would be very welcome for the local residents.

Okay, so those are my two specific recommendations. I just want to make a few general comments at the end. I support the view, I think, of the local community. We want this site to

175 remain in public use, and public management with a lot of local, continual local community input,
as to how this to be used. We don't want it to be privatised.

180 And that includes, I would say, also, that there should be public access to the grounds of
the site, including incidentally the McGill part. There should be public access to the grounds as a
kind of a larger public park we would be able to walk around.

Well, that's about all I have to say, so over to you for questions.

LA PRÉSIDENTE:

185 Thank you, Mr. Hajaly. Our first question, you related to the numbers we find in your brief
where you say that roughly 40 % of the residents of Peter-McGill district are defined as low, in a
low income line. Do you have a document with these numbers?

M. ROBERT HAJALY:

190 I don't, but I'll tell you where I got them from.

LA PRÉSIDENTE:

195 Yes.

M. ROBERT HAJALY:

200 The Peter-McGill community council, which is a local kind of community group, sponsored
a study. And I can't tell you right off the bet; it was done by a group of architects, a very big study.
A demographic study of the area and the figure comes from that study. I am afraid... I could find
out for you where is that study. I actually have it in my room, but it's buried under a whole lot of
other documents. If you want, I could find out, I could find the source, the exact source.

205 But anyhow, it comes from a demographic study that was done by a firm of architects for
our council and it's based on the census 2016. That's all I can tell you.

LA PRÉSIDENTE:

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If you could find the reference and send it to Élise Naud by email, it would be very helpful for us. Thank you.

M. ROBERT HAJALY:

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Okay. What email address would that be?

LA PRÉSIDENTE:

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I think my colleague Élise Naud will contact you and give you her address afterwards. Thank you.

M. ROBERT HAJALY:

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No problem.

LA PRÉSIDENTE:

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My colleague David will ask you a question now.

M. DAVID HANNA, COMMISSAIRE:

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Yes, two questions. Furthering on what Nicole just asked, do you remember the area that this study concerned, from what street to what street? Is it, what part of Peter-McGill I guess it is that it concerned?

M. ROBERT HAJALY:

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Peter-McGill streets, so Peter-McGill streets extends from the West border with Westmount, which is roughly Atwater, all the way to what used to be called University Street, now Robert-Bourassa Street. And from the mountain down to, I believe, Notre-Dame Street.

LE COMMISSAIRE HANNA:

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Okay, so it's the whole Peter-McGill area then?

M. ROBERT HAJALY:

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Yes, the whole Peter-McGill area. It was a demographic study of the Peter-McGill area, very specifically.

LE COMMISSAIRE HANNA:

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Okay, I understand. Yes, thank you very clarifying that. I would like to explore a little bit further your suggestion for recreational family spaces next to the pool. I think a pool suggestion is well understood. We have seen the pool. We understand it was open to the public for a while and I think, it appears that it is still the wish to do so.

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But I just like to explore this other concept you have of family recreational spaces. Because you don't define it other than being in the current parking lot. Could you explain in more details what you are thinking of exactly? What sort of concept are you talking about here?

M. ROBERT HAJALY:

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Sure, I could. As I said, I mean, actually this was promised by Projet Montréal. So I am not... it's not entirely my idea, to be quite honest. I mean, obviously, different people will have different ideas. My idea is it could, for example, include something like a tennis court, a basketball court, something where people can be a little bit active. We don't have that in; we don't have that anywhere in Western downtown, believe it or not. We don't have anything like that.

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The one thing we have, in Rutherford Park, which is close by, is a soccer/football field. But that's it. Just soccer, football and okay that's good for some people. Some people will want to play soccer, football. So it could include something like, I mean, popular activities like tennis, like basketball. That sort of thing, this is what I had in mind. Something where people could be a little bit active, we don't have that.

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LE COMMISSAIRE HANNA:

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... Sports areas then, basically?

M. ROBERT HAJALY:

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As one possibility. I am not, you know, I am just putting this forward as a possibility. Other people may have other ideas. The more important point is that there is very little outdoor recreational space for people. There is 40 000 people in the Western downtown, very little, there is just Rutherford Park, in fact, that's it. So this would be a second smaller park. Whatever it's used for, my ultimate answer is that it's up to the local community for what they wanted. If you want a suggestion from me, it would be just what I said before; basketball, tennis, something like that.

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LE COMMISSAIRE HANNA:

Okay, thank you. Thank you very much.

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LA PRÉSIDENTE:

Radouan?

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M. RADOUAN TORKMANI, COMMISSAIRE :

Good evening. You suggest in your brief that the site should welcome social housing. And you mention that services should be with this program of social housing. Could you develop more on the kind of services that should, would be a benefit for the people?

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M. ROBERT HAJALY:

Well, if you are talking about people who are, let's say, I mentioned that a good part of it should be for the homeless people. Okay, so homeless people have perhaps some difficulties, which explain why they are homeless. There are many different reasons. So, for example, you could have a psychological and social services that would be for a start. Social workers that sort of thing.

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315 And also just practical services, like for example, local dépanneur, you know food place,
that sort of thing, because it's... this site is a little bit removed from the main part of downtown, it's
a little bit of a trip. Not very big, but you could have local services like a food store and other
things; a pharmacy perhaps for the residents.

320 But in particular, I was thinking, for the homeless people, some kind of psychological and
social support services, which I think they would, might be helpful to them, that sort of thing.

LE COMMISSAIRE TORKMANI:

325 Thank you very much.

LA PRÉSIDENTE:

330 I was not sure if in your brief you were not also recommending housing, social housing or
a community housing in general. You mentioned specifically housing for homeless people?

M. ROBERT HAJALY:

Yes.

335 **LA PRÉSIDENTE:**

Okay, thank you. And what do you think about the McGill...

M. ROBERT HAJALY:

340 ... Wait, can I just answer that a little bit more?

LA PRÉSIDENTE:

345 Yes, keep on, yes.

M. ROBERT HAJALY:

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I meant social housing generally, because let's go back to my basic point. There are a lot of poor people and rents are high. So it's not just for the homeless people, but it would... but yes, but there are homeless people. So it would be partly for homeless people and they are the ones, perhaps who have certain needs, but also for others as well. For people who really need this in the Western downtown area. That's who I have in mind; poor people, low income people, basically.

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LA PRÉSIDENTE:

Low income, that's the word, the new expression. And do you have any comments on the McGill project, the New Vic?

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M. ROBERT HAJALY:

No, I'd rather... I really don't. I did watch your presentation but I am not in a position to comment on that. The only thing I would say is, you know at present, in the present part of McGill, there is public access to the grounds, so there are quite nice grounds. So I hope that there also will be that the grounds will be nice for this site and there will be public access to it.

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But as for the academic use, it's not my business really to how it should be used.

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LA PRÉSIDENTE:

I understand. Other questions from my colleagues?

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LE COMMISSAIRE HANNA:

No, that's fine, thank you. Very clear.

LA PRÉSIDENTE:

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So thank you very much for your presentation, it was very interesting. Thank you.

M. ROBERT HAJALY:

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Okay, thank you. Thank you for this opportunity, I appreciate it.

M. GILLES PAQUIN ET M. ANDRÉ SIROIS

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LA PRÉSIDENTE:

Yes. La prochaine présentation serait par Monsieur Paquet et Monsieur Sirois, s'ils sont en ligne.

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M. ANDRÉ SIROIS :

Oui, on s'est entendu, je crois que Monsieur Paquin va faire la présentation. Si nécessaire, j'interviendrai.

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LA PRÉSIDENTE :

Merci bien. Alors je vous écoute, Monsieur Paquin.

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M. GILLES PAQUIN :

Oui, bonsoir, Madame la présidente, Messieurs les commissaires. La principale raison de ma démarche, de ma venue ici, c'est la protection du patrimoine.

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Je suis un usager du parc de la montagne depuis des années, donc je tiens beaucoup à sa protection. Et quand on a appris assez récemment, pas longtemps avant les dernières élections du Québec, trois ministres du gouvernement de monsieur, du parti libéral, ont annoncé que le gouvernement avait décidé de donner l'ancien hôpital à l'Université McGill.

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Ce qui a étonné tout le monde parce que McGill parlait de évidemment, avait les yeux sur l'hôpital puis avait même parlé de payer 700 millions pour l'hôpital.