

03.06.04



**Communauté métropolitaine
de Montréal**

« The Health of Canadian Cities »

**Speech by
Mayor Gérald Tremblay**

**On the Occasion of the Opening of the
National Forum on the Economic Growth of Large Cities in Canada**

Wednesday, June 9th, 2004

Check against delivery

Dear colleagues,
Invited guests, etc.

I would first like to thank you all this evening for having responded to our invitation in such great numbers.

As you know, this forum is an important step for us to establish the terms of the new partnership that we intend to put into place with the complicity of the higher levels of government. This forum is a unique opportunity for us to demonstrate to the population that the mayors of Canada's largest cities are united in order to develop concrete solutions. Our objective: to improve, in every way, the quality of life of our citizens.

The new realities make it so that citizens expect their cities to do more than just collect the trash or clean the streets and issue permits. This new context is leading cities to think of their roles differently.

It is in our cities that the majority of Canadians live, rub shoulders, exchange ideas and develop projects together.

It is in our cities where we find skilled workers, institutions of higher learning and the capital that is necessary for investments. It is in these same cities that the essence of our national wealth is concentrated and produced.

It is also in our cities that the major challenges that we face as a society are mainly, and often more acutely, experienced. These include cultivating a skilled workforce, increased immigration, the fight against poverty, social housing, innovation and sustainable development, to name just a few examples.

Ensuring the quality of life of our citizens is also a daily challenge in our cities. Whether it involves leisure, meeting places, transportation, security or local services, municipalities remain the primary guarantors of a better quality of life.

Over these past few years, you and I have pleaded to have the role of cities recognized in terms of the creation of wealth. Our message has been heard. All the federal political parties now have a firm position on improving the health of cities throughout the country. Several provincial governments have also clearly indicated that they wish to collaborate closely with the cities.

Our persuasive work is well underway, but we must intensify our efforts to establish a new era of co-operation based on a spirit of reciprocal collaboration. The cities no longer want to be spectators in the deployment of strategies aimed at accelerating growth. They want to participate. They want to have the means to respond to the ambitions and expectations of their citizens. They want to have access to sources of revenue that grow at the same pace as the economy, an economy that they have, in fact, stimulated. In essence, they want to be seen and recognized as partners.

It is in this positive and constructive spirit that also respects the jurisdictions of our provincial government that the current forum is opening. The holding of this national forum is not the result of a federal or provincial initiative. This is a municipal initiative, confirming the new perception that the cities themselves have of their role in terms of the economic development of this country. We no longer want to be in the position of having to ask; rather, we want to participate, together, in the creation of wealth.

Here, gathered before you, are the mayors of the 22 major Canadian cities that are home to 60% of the population. Our assembly also includes representatives from the federal and provincial governments, as well as spokespeople for Canadian civil society.

In other words, we are a representative sample of what Canada counts on in terms of agents of development and change.

Each and every one of us here has the power to act on the growth of our national economy in our own areas of responsibility. Alone, our influence is limited. But, together, we can make a difference. Each and every one of us has an obligation to set ambitious objectives and develop concerted strategies to accelerate growth.

The governments and the cities must invest in strategic infrastructures without increasing the fiscal burden on taxpayers. By improving our public transit, roads and water supply, we are helping our businesses to become more productive. These businesses must then maximize these increases in

productivity by improving the quality of their equipment and the training of their workers by innovating and through their exports.

As you know, a more productive economy directly influences our collective wealth. We must take advantage of this new wealth to be able to further re-invest in the attractiveness of our cities, which further increases our contribution to accelerating growth.

In the end, all our citizens will greatly benefit from this new prosperity, because we will be better able to share it.

We need to create a new partnership in which governments, municipalities, businesses and civil society make it their responsibility, individually and collectively, to invest in the creation of wealth.

Over the past few months, we have amply expressed the significant needs of our cities. We will discuss them further during this Forum. But we now need to agree on the terms of this partnership. The next two days will be a unique opportunity to better define the path we will take.

Personally, I am expecting a great deal from this Forum, and I am hoping that we will find, here in Montréal, the inspiration necessary to lay the foundation for a new era of co-operation between governments and cities throughout the country. And it is my sincere wish that, after this forum, we will quickly spring into action.

Tomorrow, as part of the working meetings that I hope will be fruitful and will reflect the preoccupations of the major Canadian cities, we will be focusing on four themes.

For each of these four themes, a mayor will make a general presentation: Mr. Jacques Olivier on the theme of *Giving the City-Regions Ambitious Growth Objectives*; Mr. Gilles Vaillancourt on *Investing to Accelerate Economic Growth*. Mr. David Miller on *Sharing the Revenues From New Growth*; and Mr. Jean-Paul L'Allier, on *Reinvesting to Provide the Means for our Ambitions*. We have entrusted Mr. Mario Pezzini, Head of Division in the OECD, with the task of providing a summary of the day's discussions and compiling the first conclusions drawn from this exercise. All of this should serve to feed our reflections and discussions for the next two days.

All in all, the theme of this forum is quite vast, and the quality of the participants is impressive.

So, I wish us all an excellent forum. I would also like to express this sincere hope: that there will be a "before" and an "after" in this forum; that in between the moments that I am speaking these words to you and the closure of this forum, the thinking on the role of cities will be changed to recognize municipalities as participants in, and engines of, the economic growth of this country.