

Dissipating Darkness: Governing Nighttime in Montreal, 1954-1986

By

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Abstract

In 1954, fresh off the heels of a sensational inquiry into political corruption, Montrealers elected reformist mayor Jean Drapeau. At City Hall, and along with a cadre of police officers, Drapeau produced a plan that sought to clear the city of its disreputable characters and their preferred haunts: brothels, nightclubs, and gambling dens. Fundamentally, city authorities understood nighttime as a moment that enabled vice and immorality, and because it had been unregulated for so long, they reorganized policing and bylaws to gain control over it. Although he lost the 1957 municipal election, Drapeau returned to power in 1960 and extended this project as he governed Montreal under the banner of the Civic Party until 1986. Throughout this quarter-century the Civic Party made significant reforms in its attempt to transform Montreal into a cosmopolitan destination. To upkeep the city's cosmopolitan image, it gave police the go ahead to crackdown on sex workers, the queer community, working class labourers, and dissident artists.

Informed by currents in the fields of Canadian urban history and the history of sexuality, this dissertation shows how the transformation of Montreal during the 'Drapeau years' (~1954-1986) partially revolved around a struggle to control the night and its economies. To realize its goals, the municipal administration created and amended several bylaws that defined proper behaviour in public space by regulating obscene literature, nightclub mingling, protest, loitering,

prostitution, and soliciting. Yet, in an era of social protest, the municipal administration also had to keep its own workforce under control. In moments of great defiance, when the city's transit employees, police officers, and firefighters went on strike, they revealed how unruly nights could lead the city into chaos and anarchy. Despite a fleeting moment of transgression in 1969, the city's Police Department generally acted as the main force regulating visible forms of disreputability as it removed sex workers from streets, raided queer nightclubs and bathhouses, and oversaw the destruction of public art installations.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation owes to the brilliance of novelists like Marie-Claire Blais, Leonard Cohen, Dany Laferrière, Hugh MacLennan, Gabrielle Roy, and Michel Tremblay, each of whom informed this twenty-first century reader about life in twentieth century Montreal. Inspired – and fuelled by countless espressos from the University of Toronto’s student-run cafés – I embarked on a journey that questioned how city politics and governance transformed Montreal during the second half of that century.

Above all, however, this dissertation was made possible with the help of many people and institutions. First and foremost, my thesis advisor Sean Mills who showed unwavering support over the years. His generosity, mentorship, and sharp intellect were fundamental to the completion of this work and to my training as a historian. It has been a true privilege to learn from him. I would also like to thank the members of the thesis committee and examiners for their thoughtful comments and advice at every stage: Laurie Bertram, Paula Hastings, Tamara Myers, and Steve Penfold. My gratitude also goes to faculty members and administrative staff at the University of Toronto who became unofficial mentors: Paul Cohen, Matt Farish, Brian Gettler, Vivian Hwang, Franca Iacovetta, Luis van Isschot, and Daniel Aureliano Newman.

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Higgins guided me and readily considered some of the themes that piqued my curiosity and interest. (Under very serendipitous circumstances I happened to be on-site when Ross Higgins received the Senate 150th Anniversary Medal in recognition of his years of service to the community – indeed, I was witnessing history while crafting it.)

When this project was an idea in its embryonic stage, I received funding for a summer residency at the Canadian Centre for Architecture. Here, I received advice from archivists Mathieu Pomerleau and Aeron MacHattie, who were helpful, considerate, and patient with my requests. The residency also allowed me to meet inspiring scholars from different spheres, including art history and architecture; thanks to Kim Förster, Valeria Téllez Niemeyer, and Lukas Pauer for stimulating conversations. The following summer I was a Corsini fellow at McMaster University. There, a few months before the pandemic, I was able to have lengthy conversations about Canadian history with Maxime Dagenais, Ian McKay, Jodey Nurse, and Julia Pyryeskina. Beyond the residency and the fellowship, I also received financial support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), the Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS), the Jean Armour Graduate Scholarship in Canadian History (UofT), the Centre des Études de la France et du Monde francophone (UofT), and the Faculty of Arts and Science (UofT).

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Because Toronto is home to a lively intellectual community I also benefitted from different institutional spheres. At York University I enrolled in Sean Kheraj's seminar on North American environmental history and around the same time the Glendon College family welcomed me to its *Café en français*, which allowed me to meet a vibrant francophone community. In this city I was very fortunate to share ideas, meals, and coffees with great historians including Ben Bradley, Will Straw, and Cheryl Thompson. And from my home in the Annex, I enjoyed many long-distance conversations about urban history with Harold Bérubé, Jennifer Bonnell, Michèle Dagenais, Richard Harris, Nicolas Kenny, and Nari Shelekpayev.

Somehow each thesis chapter was conceived and written in a different setting; Chapter 1 in the history department's graduate student space where I met brilliant colleagues; Chapter 2 in an office I shared with Julia Pyryeskina at McMaster University; Chapter 3 in my home office when the outside world seemed too precarious during COVID-19's first lockdown; Chapter 4 in a makeshift office in Penticton, British Columbia (a city that is home to Canada's finest used bookshop); Chapter 5 from locked down Montreal – more precisely from Dan Ross's flat, a great friend and mentor who claims to forgive me despite a home swap blunder; and I made final edits from Vernon, British Columbia while teaching undergraduate courses at Okanagan College. I write this to recall and remember the people and the places that have made this dissertation not only possible, but a pleasant enterprise.

My deepest thanks, however, are reserved for my friends and family, particularly Jayla Kennedy who deserves a great deal of credit for sticking alongside me throughout this journey.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iv
Table of Contents	vii
List of Figures	viii
Abbreviations	ix
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Red Lights and Reforms, 1954-1965	19
Chapter 2: The Political Economy, 1963-1971	67
Chapter 3: Essential Services, 1967-1974	99
Chapter 4: Repression and Activism, 1972-1981	149
Chapter 5: Sexist Bylaws and Sex Work, 1976-1986	193
Conclusion	234
Bibliography	239

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1: A 1943 map of bawdy houses and rooming houses in the Central District (left) and Red Light district (right).</i>	33
<i>Figure 2: Photo taken precisely when Jean Drapeau (centre) took position at the mayor's seat.</i>	47
<i>Figure 3: Gabriel Desmarais, "Jean Guilda, artiste de music-hall."</i>	64
<i>Figure 4: Expo 67's bright displays appear in the foreground while Jacques-Cartier Bridge, and the road leading to Montreal, loom in the background.</i>	68
<i>Figure 5: Man and His World (top) stands across the river from Montreal's downtown (bottom).</i>	71
<i>Figure 6: A cartoon conflates the notion that women who work in establishments serving alcohol are also involved in sex work.</i>	81
<i>Figure 7: Marc-Antoine Nadeau, "L'être le plus extraordinaire que j'aie connu. Jean Drapeau."</i>	90
<i>Figure 8: Young and energized, the striking police officers and firefighters cheer during an assembly at the Paul Sauvé Arena.</i>	114
<i>Figure 9: An anti-riot squad of the Sûreté du Québec attempts to disperse a crowd on Peel Street.</i>	117
<i>Figure 10: A protestor douses a heap of effigies with fuel before setting it ablaze.</i>	125
<i>Figure 11: A police officer attempts to disentangle FCQ protesters.</i>	128
<i>Figure 12: One of the nighttime fires during the Red Weekend.</i>	139
<i>Figure 13: The remains of an apartment on Rivard Street after the weekend.</i>	142
<i>Figure 14: Patricia Harris lost all her belongings that weekend, except two of her six cats.</i>	144
<i>Figure 15: A stamp on an official poster for Corridart suggests that it was censored.</i>	150
<i>Figure 16: Five-foot, six-inch Drapeau stands inside the leviathan created by Roger Taillibert.</i>	163
<i>Figure 17: "Police: Entrapment Olympic Crackdown," The Body Politic, August 1976.</i>	169
<i>Figure 18: City employees dismantle Mémoire de la rue Sherbrooke with the help of a crane.</i>	184
<i>Figure 19: Bruegel's The Tower of Babel, the unfinished Olympic Stadium, and a decaying \$1 Canadian bill.</i>	191
<i>Figure 20: Mayor Eggleton of Toronto (left) and Mayor Drapeau (right).</i>	212
<i>Figure 21: Montreal feminists during an anti-pornography rally.</i>	218
<i>Figure 22: Thousands took to the streets after the raid at Bud's. The placards read: "Quick, build more prisons 'cause there's another five hundred thousand of us!" and "Repeal the bawdy house laws!"</i>	225
<i>Figure 23: Two Saint-Jacques ward residents survey the damage caused during the Red Weekend.</i>	238

Abbreviations

ADGQ	Association pour les droits des gai(e)s du Québec
CACP	Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police
CAL	Civic Action League
CHAR	Comité homosexuel anti-répression
COAD	Calling Out Against Discrimination
COJO	Comité Organisateur des Jeux Olympiques de 1976
FCQ	Front commun des Québécoises
FLF	Front de libération des femmes
FLH	Front de libération homosexuel
GHAP	Groupe Homosexuel d'Action Politique
GMCA	Greater Montreal Council of Arts [<i>Conseil des arts de la région métropolitaine de Montréal</i>]
LDL	Ligue des droits et libertés
MCM	Montreal Citizens' Movement
MFA	Montreal Firemen's Association
MPB	Montreal Policemen's Brotherhood
MTC	Montreal Transportation Commission
PMC	Public Morality Committee
QCA	Quebec Court of Appeal
QLB	Quebec Liquor Board
QPP / SQ	Quebec Provincial Police / Sûreté du Québec
QSC	Quebec Superior Court
SCR	Supreme Court Reports

Archival Collections

AGQ	Archives Gaies du Québec
AVM	Archives de la Ville de Montréal
BAnQ	Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec
CCA	Canadian Centre for Architecture
UQÀM	Université du Québec à Montréal

Bylaws (chronological order)

1905	Bylaw 333, Anti-Loitering
1927	Bylaw 926, Concerning Food Establishments and Restaurants
1942	Bylaw 1715, Concerning the Curfew
1955	Bylaw 2223, Anti-Pinball Machine
1961	Bylaw 2655, Concerning the Police Department
1967	Bylaw 3416, Anti-Mingling
1969	Bylaw 3926, Anti-Demonstration
1980	Bylaw 5464, Anti-Prostitution
1983	Bylaw 6249, Anti-Soliciting

Introduction

In February 1972 two Montreal journalists embarked on a transcontinental journey. After a brief stopover in Mexico City, the duo boarded a flight for Guadalajara where, upon arrival, they met an old man whom the locals called Licenciado. Licenciado greeted them energetically and, despite nightfall, he secured the last leg of their trip by chauffeuring them to their hotel. The following day, when the journalists reconvened with Licenciado, he invited them to his mountain-side estate located on the outskirts of Guadalajara. The barbed wire property, Licenciado told them, gave him privacy and allowed him to spend carefree days enjoying the territory's subtropical climate while reading or farming. The old man's routine was simple, and he liked sharing it with Toutsy, a faithful Dobermann that added a sense of comfort and peace to his life. Of course, Licenciado – the Spanish word for “attorney” – was not his birth name; it was a pseudonym and a reminder of what had been his life's profession. Licenciado lived modestly in rural Mexico, and, although mundane, this lifestyle was a desirable denouement to his tumultuous life. After all, he once told a Montreal reporter, “I loathe and detest city life. I would love it if I could stay in the country the rest of my life.”¹ Yet, the secrecy of his whereabouts from the moment he fled Montreal in 1958 until he died at the age of sixty-nine in 1976 hinted at a deeper need to evade Montreal's criminal underworld. In fact, the journalists had made the long journey to meet with Licenciado, the one they and all of Quebec knew as Pacifique (Pax) Plante, for an exclusive interview that promised to shed light on his illustrious professional career during which he had waged war on corruption and organized crime.²

¹ Stuart Keate, “The Unhorsed Galahad of Montreal,” *Maclean's*, 15 July 1948.

² Alain Stanké, Jean-Louis Morgan, and Pax Plante, *Pax, lutte à finir avec la pègre : un portrait-robot du célèbre incorruptible Pacifique Plante* (Montreal: La Presse, 1972).

After welcoming the journalists into his home, Pax Plante began retrieving old memories of mid-twentieth-century Montreal. During lengthy conversations he talked about the city during the 1940s and 1950s and described it as wide-open and gripped by an underworld whose racketeering power extracted profits from nighttime establishments. Late-night gambling dens, brothels, speakeasies, and nightclubs were connected by an underworld that sustained business by keeping police officers on the payroll and funneling dirty money to politicians.³ Plante reminisced about the war he had waged against this underworld, first as the head of the city's Morality Squad and later as assistant chief of police, and the pleasure he took in cleaning up Montreal through waves of successful raids. At a revealing moment during the conversation – after he had reemphasized the tenacity of Montreal's informal economy – he disclosed the crux of his crusade: “From the very beginning my motto was: *Throw the spotlight on 'em!* And if you'll allow me to recall what I learned in college, it is perhaps of these people that the ecclesiastic refer to when they speak of the *lucifugous*.”⁴ According to Plante, Montreal's lucifugal underworld had been comprised of sex workers, cab drivers, gangsters, service industry employees, corrupt police and politicians, nightclub and cabaret artists, and, perhaps most importantly, residents and tourists who consumed night's pleasures. These individuals had made darkness their private playground and Plante made it his mission to shed light on their social spheres. Propelled by a persevering belief in justice and morality he, along with other city reformers, contended that the night had been playing host to activities and desires that represented disorder and immorality.⁵ In fact, Plante's motto – *Throw the spotlight on... those*

³ In 1950 Plante published a tell-all book that elucidated two truths about Montreal's “commercialized vice”: the underworld could not exist without police protection and, conversely, police protection of the underworld could not exist without corruption and negligence from the city's political elite. All 15,000 copies of his book sold-out within two weeks. Pacifique Plante, *Montréal sous le règne de la pègre* (Montréal: Éditions de l'Action nationale, 1950).

⁴ The Oxford English Dictionary defines lucifugous as “[creatures] shunning the light.” Stanké, Morgan, and Plante, *Pax, lutte à finir avec la pègre*, 97.

⁵ This negative perception of darkness was informed by the industrial, political, and religious moral compass that varied according to place and time. See Mariana Valverde “The Work of Allegories” in *The Age of Light, Soap, and*

who flee light – encapsulates how mid-twentieth-century social reformers understood nighttime as a moment of disorder and moral danger that needed to be controlled and governed.

This dissertation discusses the period from the 1950s through the 1980s, when the regulation of night loomed especially large on the agenda of Montreal’s municipal leaders. It focuses on public and private spaces where nighttime regulation was enforced and contested. It demonstrates that, above all, the regulation of the night was a project that would alter the cultural and social norms regarding alcohol, labour, sex, and dissent. In mid-twentieth-century Montreal, as in other North American cities, rules and regulations were being renegotiated as urban authorities, journalists, activists, artists, residents, and sex workers debated who had a right to public space at night, what constituted acceptable behaviour or art, and whose sexual activity sustained the social order and whose threatened to destroy it.⁶ This dissertation begins with the coming to power of a municipal reform movement, one that was deeply tied to policing and that built on a long tradition of moral regulation and suspicion of nonconformity. Police amassed information on illicit behaviours and the informal economy, and it used this information to inform politicians and encourage them to further their reformist projects, thus becoming part of a feedback loop that would see the police and municipal politicians mutually reinforcing each other’s drive to morally cleanse the city. In fact, the crucial role played by the police was brought home when the Police Department (along with the Fire Department) went on a wildcat strike in 1969, throwing the entire reformist project into chaos.

Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925, 34-43 (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc, 1991). Tim Edensor, “The Gloomy City: Rethinking the Relationship Between Light and Dark,” *Urban Studies*, vol. 52, no. 3 (February 2015): 425.

⁶ See Anna Gray Fischer, *The Streets Belong to Us: Sex, Race, and Police Power from Segregation to Gentrification* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2022). Anna Lvovsky, *Vice Patrol: Cops, Courts, and the Struggle Over Urban Gay Life Before Stonewall* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

Accounts by those who were affected by the reformers' efforts to clean up the city reveal an important conjuncture in the histories of urban governance, regulation, and sexuality during a period of social change.⁷ Among these stories is one told by a woman who arrived in Montreal precisely when Pax Plante began his massive crackdown during the late-1940s. Like hundreds of thousands of mid-twentieth-century rural Quebecers, Rita Picard moved to the province's economic centre hoping to get a slice of the city's postwar economic prosperity. Rather than adhering to the formal economy, however, she, like many postwar migrants who moved to the 'big city,' chose to earn money in the informal economy as a sex worker.⁸ In a tell-all biography about her life in the industry, Picard writes that when she arrived in Montreal, sex work functioned in an orderly and safe environment, in brothels and under the watchful eyes of housekeepers and madams – a position she assumed later in her career.⁹ While this lucrative industry had been safeguarded by police officers, businesspeople, and politicians during the early-twentieth-century, it was completely upended during the late-1940s and early-1950s when Plante removed the mechanisms that had allowed businesses to benefit from police protection and ordered successive raids. Indeed, her trade was the first order of business on the municipal reformers' agenda as they promised their supporters that they would eradicate "commercialized vice" from the city. Although sex workers' protection had been taken away, they would continue to work in various nightclubs and cabarets. By the late-1960s, however, authorities

⁷ For firsthand accounts see William Weintraub, *City Unique: Montreal Days and Nights in the 1940s and '50s* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1996). See also the collection of oral histories compiled by the Centre d'histoire de Montréal, Catherine Charlebois and Paul-André Linteau, *Quartiers disparus. Red light, Faubourg à m'lasse, Goose Village* (Montreal: Les éditions Cardinal, 2014); Catherine Charlebois and Mathieu Lapointe, *Scandale! Le Montréal illicite, 1940-1960* (Montréal: Les éditions Cardinal, 2016).

⁸ See Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 366-7.

⁹ Picard would spend a total of eighteen years and six months in prison for sex work. In fact, her biography, written while she was imprisoned, came on the heels of Mayor Drapeau's final assault on the industry. Rita Picard, *Ma vie dans les bordels* (Montreal: Éditions Québecor, 1985).

heightened control over these establishments too, and forcibly displaced most sex workers outdoors – to street corners, parks, and public squares.

As several Montreal historians have already demonstrated, the sensational Caron Inquiry (1950-1954), which brought commercialized vice into full public view, paved the way for these political and popular reforms.¹⁰ Within the span of a few weeks in October 1954 the inquiry published its report, and a new municipal party was elected to office. Headed by Jean Drapeau, the Civic Action League's platform – and its campaign slogan “serving the public, not ourselves” – promised to end corruption and restore “honesty” in Montreal politics.¹¹ During Mayor Drapeau's first term the tenets of civic reforms produced impressive upheavals as he built on the momentum that Plante had created. After the late-1940s crackdown, Pax Plante, now assistant chief of police under Mayor Drapeau, supervised a series of additional raids on the few and discreet brothels that remained, which left the sex industry disorganized and allowed organized crime and male pimps to gradually encroach on the industry.¹² Elsewhere, municipal authorities heightened control over night by enforcing the closing hours of establishments with liquor permits and by dismantling practices in the taxi industry that allowed revellers to cavort from one clandestine business to another. Indeed, Montreal experienced quick and radical transformation during these years, which has led historians to see this as reformism's culminating moment. However – and as Rita Picard's personal story illustrates – many people and their activities would remain, at least partly, beyond civic reformers' control. Because of the impossibility of completely altering the behaviour of an entire a city and uprooting vice, the war

¹⁰ See Mathieu Lapointe, *Nettoyer Montréal: les campagnes de moralité publique, 1940-1954* (Québec: Septentrion, 2014). Jean-Paul Brodeur, *La délinquance de l'ordre. Recherches sur les commissions d'enquête I* (Ville LaSalle: Hurtubise HMH, 1984). Suzanne Morton, *At Odds: Gambling and Canadians, 1919-1969* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

¹¹ J.-Z.-Léon Patenaude, *Le vrai visage de Jean Drapeau* (Montreal: Les Éditions du Jour, 1962), 106-7.

¹² See Pierre de Champlain, *Histoire du crime organisé à Montréal de 1900 à 1980* (Montreal: Les Éditions de l'Homme, 2014), 390-2.

against real or perceived moral threats persisted throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

Although Drapeau and his party were unseated in 1957, he returned to power in 1960 under the newly established Civic Party and governed Montreal for the next quarter century. In 1986, during the final year of his eighth mandate – after a reign that outlasted seven Canadian prime ministers and nine Quebec premiers – the seventy-year-old mayor announced that he would not seek re-election. By then he had solidified his place as one of the most remarkable politicians in Canadian history. Under his leadership the Civic Party ushered in an unprecedented construction boom that transformed the city’s landscape and its skyline. This, in turn, required supporting new transit infrastructure, including the building of a vast subway system and an adjoining underground city that included miles of shops, restaurants, bars, and theatres. Where the automobile was more suitable, the city made major public investments in street widenings. Meanwhile, events like the 1967 world’s fair and the 1980 international horticultural exposition – both of which drew millions of visitors to Montreal – gave the impression that anything was possible for the city.¹³ During the former, crowds flocked to the site to experience the visual and aural spectacle of the strikingly modernist vision of the prolonged event, entitled *Man and His World*. As historian H.V. Nelles writes, the event helped Canadians “imagine what a modern and sophisticated people they were becoming in the eyes of the world.”¹⁴ The Civic Party sought to show that Montreal deserved its place alongside internationally renowned cities, and Mayor Drapeau spoke proudly of his city and its high culture, especially when he met with tourists, international celebrities, dignitaries, politicians, royalty, and, toward the end of his career, the Pope. For Mayor Drapeau, however, the city’s

¹³ André Lortie (ed), *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big* (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2004). Benoit Gignac, *Jean Drapeau : Le maire qui rêvait sa ville* (Montreal: Les Éditions La Presse, 2009).

¹⁴ H.V. Nelles, *A Little History of Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2011), 180.

pinnacle of glory happened when it hosted the 1976 Summer Olympics. For a few weeks, international television networks and the printed press projected Montreal's cosmopolitanism.¹⁵ Indeed, no twentieth century Canadian politician at any level of government would produce such lasting monuments and memories for his or her constituents.

As Montreal declined from its prominence as the industrial engine of Canada and shifted toward a post-industrial, service-oriented city, renewal and growth required vast sums of investment dollars. Drapeau and his parties, the Civic Action League and the Civic Party, were able to attract billions of investment dollars for projects like the ones described above by prolonging the war against vice that began in the late-1940s under Pax Plante. Politicians knew that Montreal's transformation into a modern and "honest" metropolis – one that could make it "the pilot city of the new world"¹⁶ – hinged on its ability to control the night. Put another way, reformers wanted nighttime activities to be brought into the formal economy, one that was free from sin and transgression. From the very beginning, for instance, members of the reformist Comité de moralité publique (the committee that would be responsible for the Caron Inquiry), drove around, night after night, noting which restaurants or nightclubs were open and registering the sorts of activity transpiring within or outside of them. According to historian Will Straw, the members' reports obsessed over late-night entertainment and sex because "it was the result of deliberate infractions of urban law and propriety."¹⁷ When one of their own, Jean Drapeau, became mayor, he understood the city through a comparable lens and would, himself, drive

¹⁵ The Olympic Games was an element that comprised what one political scientist called Montreal's "politics of global imagineering." Darel E. Paul, "World cities as hegemonic projects: The politics of global imagineering in Montreal," *Political Geography* 23 (2004): 571-96. See also Jacques Léveillé and Robert K. Whelan, "Montreal: The Struggle to Become a 'World City,'" in *Leadership and Urban Regeneration: Cities in North America and Europe*, ed. Dennis Judd and Michael Parkinson (London: Sage Publications, 1990): 152-71.

¹⁶ This was an oft-repeated pipedream. Ian Adams, "The Busy Little Man Who's Building Big Town," *Maclean's*, 3 December 1966. Patrick Doyle, "'First city of 21st century,' Drapeau's next target," *Montreal Gazette*, 20 February 1974. "Un compromis hâté par Québec a fait rentrer les pompiers," *Le Devoir*, 4 November 1974.

¹⁷ Will Straw, "The Urban Night," in *Cartographies of Place: Navigating the Urban*, ed. Janine Marchessault and Michael Darroch (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 192.

around town in his black sedan on the lookout for nuisances that gave Montreal an unclean or immoral appearance. Through decades of eighteen-hour workdays, Drapeau shaped a cosmopolitan personality for the city. In this sense, and like fellow members of the Comité de moralité publique, he constructed his own version of high modernist local knowledge.¹⁸

As mayor of Montreal, Drapeau paid careful attention to visual aesthetics and used this intimate knowledge to develop new regulations for the city, and especially its nighttime economy. Indeed, to integrate night into the formal economy the municipal administration created and amended numerous bylaws that provided a ready tool for police officers to justify crackdowns and raids on disreputable or nonconforming behaviours. Crucially, the bylaws increased the city's ability to govern the night and reorganize its economy. When the Civic Party was determined, the law was put to use to achieve the desired results. The process of using law to regulate the night effectively demonstrates French philosopher Henri Lefebvre's notion that "political power knows how to utilise and manipulate time, dates, time-tables," and American sociologist Murray Melbin's claim that "a change in the temporal order jolts the social system."¹⁹ Control over the night thus emerged as a struggle between competing ideas about the urban political economy. Regulatory measures created temporal order, and temporal order allowed authorities to assert control over the most unruly aspects of city life. In other words, it was the municipal administration's view that a city that could not govern and regulate the night was a city in disarray, and a city in disarray would deter deep-pocketed investors, entrepreneurs, and tourists from selecting it as a place to spend money.²⁰

¹⁸ Tina Loo with Meg Stanley, "An Environmental History of Progress: Damming the Peace and Columbia Rivers," *The Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 92, issue 3 (September 2011): 407.

¹⁹ Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, trans. Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore (New York: Continuum, 2004), 68. Murray Melbin, *Night as frontier: colonizing the world after dark* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 8.

²⁰ Montreal's emphasis on tourist development took flight during this period. See Michael J. Broadway, "Montreal's Changing Tourist Landscape," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, vol. 2, no. 1 (June 1993): 30-48.

The battle for increased law enforcement power was grounded in an urban political economy that was based in morals policing. Although the administration's anxiety over vice and immorality evolved over time, depending on the historical moment, one thing remained clear: Montreal's transformation was rooted in a heteronormative vision of urban space, one which believed that illicit, immoral, and unruly visual displays had to be expelled from public view to make way for modern projects. Therefore, throughout the second half of the twentieth century, as the city's landscape was being (re)developed and its image recast, the night became a key battleground between diverse groups that wrestled to shape the city's future.

During the second half of the twentieth century, under the Civic Action League and the Civic Party, the city revised the boundaries of morality by engaging in what American historian Anna Gray Fischer calls "sexual policing" – the targeting and legal control of people's bodies and their presumed sexual activities.²¹ Sexual policing meant more than simply policing prostitution laws per se, or the narrowly defined exchange of sex for money. It amounted to enforcing vaguely termed bylaws that reinforced public order and social hierarchies. Reflecting both the biases of many officers and the structures of nonheteronormative life, nighttime policing often posed a special risk to socially and economically underprivileged individuals, especially those marginalized by race, gender, and sexuality. Authorities used anti-loitering, anti-prostitution, and anti-soliciting bylaws to forge nighttime cleanup campaigns in public space. In times of extreme anxiety, authorities raided nighttime venues like bathhouses, cabarets, nightclubs, and bars because they saw each one as representing a threat to the social order. These raids mostly targeted women, trans, or gay men and were based on reports that severely overestimated each community's position in the sex industry. Montreal's social reformers believed in the tenets of respectable heteronormativity, but their vision was wide,

²¹ Fischer, *The Streets Belong to Us*, 2, 7.

extending to other perceived forms of moral decay like erotic films and literature, protest art, and the yellow press.²² At one point this vision even targeted pinball machines as a form of moral decay. Although different, all these elements were part of the municipal administration's goal to remake the city into a realm of cultural consumption based on moral respectability and middle-class values.

Because political and police control over night was deeply entangled in urban policies and legislative processes, this dissertation also shows how the history of nighttime regulation and control was dependent on the shifting boundaries of jurisdictional authority. During the second half of the twentieth century the city tried to regulate behaviour, sex, alcohol, and freedom of speech in public space – each of which was beyond its legal jurisdiction. Local bylaws were often created with the goal to crackdown on elements that tarnished Montreal's image. This process not only exploited the vague nature of the Canadian legal system but also defied legal conventions. For instance, during the politically charged year of 1969 the city enacted an anti-demonstration bylaw under the premise that it was regulating the use of public space, even though it had long been clear that the right to assemble and express political opinions – what the bylaw was actually targeting – falls under exclusive federal jurisdiction. In the 1980s the city used a similar approach to curb street-based sex work even though prostitution laws also fall under federal authority. City lawyers held fast on the claim that Montreal's 1980 anti-prostitution bylaw and its 1983 anti-soliciting bylaw regulated public space and not prostitution per se. But the administration did not have much success in its arguments; the courts, both the Superior Court of Quebec and the Supreme Court of Canada,

²² As feminist historian Viviane Namaste writes concerning the city's yellow press, its substance not only dealt with female cabaret performers and artistes, but covered, in a much more general way, gossip about Montreal's nightlife. Viviane Namaste, *Imprimés interdits. La censure des journaux jaunes au Québec, 1955-1975* (Quebec: Septentrion, 2017), 27, 147.

tended to side with the province or the federal government in constitutional disputes, striking down municipal bylaws as ultra vires.

The night was thus a time and space in which different rules applied and the municipal administration repeatedly tried to impose its authority over it. The expansion of municipal control over nighttime was bound up in norms and codes that have deep historical roots in heteronormativity and moral regulation. The policing of sexual activities, of course, did not begin in the mid-twentieth-century; on the grandest scale, the mid- to late-twentieth-century policing of it was just the latest chapter in a long history of repression. Indeed, historians have demonstrated the value of studying broader Canadian social, cultural, and moral debates by examining how shifting public discourse explains the pace and direction of legal change.²³ This dissertation contributes to the growing literature on the history of sexuality in Canada by extending its frameworks to municipal governance. As such, I found considerable inspiration from the work of Constance Backhouse, Patricia Gentile, Gary Kinsman, Valerie J. Korinek, Andrée Lévesque, and Tamara Myers – each of whom has examined the extent to which various Canadian state agencies established power over groups by promulgating their own preferred understandings of those populations.²⁴ Examining how Montreal’s Civic Party influenced this history provides valuable insight into Canada’s sexual revolution. Although I focus on the somewhat all-encompassing topic of municipal governance and policing, the dissertation reveals how nighttime surveillance of queer community members and sex workers could not be

²³ See Marcel Martel, *Canada the Good: A Short History of Vice Since 1500* (Waterloo: WLU Press, 2014). Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble With Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

²⁴ Constance Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice: Women and Law in Nineteenth Century Canada* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1991). Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile (eds.), *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010). Valerie J. Korinek, *Prairie Fairies: A History of Queer Communities and People in Western Canada, 1930-1985* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018). Andrée Lévesque, *Making and Breaking the Rules: Women in Quebec, 1919-1939*, trans. Yvonne M. Klein (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010). Tamara Myers, *Caught: Montreal’s Modern Girls and the Law, 1869-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

disentangled from the vision the administration had for Montreal and its place in the world.

Crucially, and as I have already elaborated, the Civic Party's effort to recast the city's image had deep connections to notions of heteronormative and morality. Accordingly, this dissertation also draws from the work of historian Anna Lvovsky, who has demonstrated how local police departments in the United States collaborated with magistrates and politicians to enforce punitive laws, often to the disadvantage of the communities they patrolled and governed.²⁵

Illustrating these connections underlines the value of doing a kind of urban history that overlaps with and learns from wider scholarship, connecting social, legal, and political history.

This dissertation also adds to the study of urban governance, which has a long intellectual genealogy. Historians of Montreal have made important contributions to this historiography, notably by analyzing the expansion of the city's territory and bureaucracy from the early settler colonial period to the mid-twentieth-century.²⁶ Donald Fyson, for instance, has demonstrated that the city began to act as a semi-autonomous political structure independent from colonial authority beginning in the late-eighteenth-century, and certainly by the early-nineteenth-century. To illustrate this, he points to local justices of the peace who divided the city's territory into wards, enacted bylaws, and appointed bailiffs.²⁷ In 1831, a turning point in its history, Montreal was incorporated and officially became a distinct political entity; its first charter contained twenty-four sections that defined its powers, duties, and functions. According

²⁵ Lvovsky, *Vice Patrol*, 7-8.

²⁶ On this note see the hefty two-volume set edited by Dany Fougères and Roderick MacLeod, *Montreal: The History of a North American City* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017). Paul-André Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération* (Montreal: Boréal, 2000). Robert Sweeny, *Why Did We Choose to Industrialize? Montreal, 1819-1849* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015). Jean-Claude Marsan, *Montreal in Evolution: Historical Analysis of the Development of Montreal's Architecture and Urban Environment* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990). Michèle Dagenais, *Des pouvoirs et des hommes. L'Administration municipale de Montréal, 1900-1950* (Montreal & Kingston : McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000). Harold Bérubé, *Des sociétés distinctes. Gouverner les banlieues bourgeoises de Montréal, 1880-1939* (Montreal & Kingston : McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014).

²⁷ Donald Fyson, "La gouvernance municipale avant la municipalité: Montréal, 1760-1840," in *La gouvernance Montréalaise: De la ville-frontière à la métropole*, ed. Léon Robichaud, Harold Bérubé, Donald Fyson (Montreal: Éditions Multimondes, 2014), 36.

to urban historian Michèle Dagenais, this process, what she effectively calls the “municipalization” of the territory, can be understood within the larger process of a new liberal order at play in Canadian society.²⁸ This dissertation expands on this theory by arguing that throughout the mid- to late-twentieth-century reformers profoundly changed the municipal apparatus of regulation and control of night, and in doing so reshaped Montreal’s economic, social, and cultural life. It positions the governance of night at the centre of the historical process to reveal another spatial expansion of the municipal framework. Indeed, as Canadian sociologist Alan Hunt writes, “‘space’ not only has a spatial, but also a temporal dimension exemplified in deep anxieties about the rapid expansion of the cities and life on street-corners after dark.”²⁹

Before proceeding with the dissertation and each chapter’s core argument, it’s important to say a few words about the transformation of Montreal’s political system given that it had a profound impact on the period’s democratic process. In 1940, after the province placed Montreal under trusteeship following its financial default (its second under Mayor Camillien Houde), Quebec Premier Adélard Godbout imposed a system known as the “regime of the ninety-nine.”³⁰ The idea behind the regime was to regulate spending at City Hall by increasing city council membership to ninety-nine councillors. Within this system one-third of council was elected by property owners in eleven new wards (Class A councillors), one-third was elected by all householders who paid water or business tax in the same eleven wards (Class B councillors), and one-third was elected by thirteen designated public bodies – including universities, the

²⁸ Michèle Dagenais, “The Municipal Territory: A Product of the Liberal Order?,” in *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, eds. Jean-François Constant and Michel Ducharme (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 203.

²⁹ Alan Hunt “Regulating Heterosocial Space: Sexual Politics in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Journal of Historical Sociology*, vol. 15, no. 1 (March 2002): 1.

³⁰ City contributions to provide social assistance during the Great Depression were a major cause of this default. Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération*, 406-22.

Chamber of Commerce, and unions (Class C councillors). The city's executive committee was itself made up of the mayor plus two representatives of each Class that in turn elected its chair and vice-chair. Since the three categories of councillors came from remarkably different interest groups, the council chamber at City Hall quickly became notoriously heterogenous in ideas and concerns. If anything, the "regime of the ninety-nine," dominated by male representatives of the wealthiest groups in the city, institutionalized the historical link between elites and urban governance.³¹ And although the trusteeship ended in 1944, the system remained.

Eventually Quebec Premier Antonio Barrette commissioned an inquiry into Montreal's byzantine political structure.³² In 1960, Montrealers overwhelmingly voted in favour to abolish Class C councillors during a referendum that was held in conjunction with the municipal election.³³ Later, the Quebec government reorganized Montreal's political structure. Under the new system the mayor was given the power to choose the executive committee in the same way that a prime minister selects a cabinet. With a majority in council, and without the checks-and-balances of an opposition, the municipal administration could work in total secrecy and shield itself from public debate. These adjustments marked the beginning of a new political era.³⁴

* * *

This dissertation shows how Montreal's mid- to late-twentieth-century transformation was enabled by three interrelated processes. First, I demonstrate that this transformation was enabled by a greater control and regulation of night. From the 1950s to the 1980s, basic

³¹ Andrew Sancton, *Governing the Island of Montreal: Language Differences and Metropolitan Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 32.

³² See Paul Champagne, *Rapport de la Commission d'étude du système administratif de Montréal (2 volumes)* (Quebec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1960-1961).

³³ "Election Aftermath Includes Quotes, Familiar Faces," *Montreal Gazette*, 25 October 1960.

³⁴ On democracy at City Hall see Bourassa and Léveillé (eds.), *Le système politique de Montréal : recueil de textes* (Montreal: Cahiers de l'ACFAS, 1986). Marcel Adam, *La démocratie à Montréal : ou, Le vaisseau dort* (Montreal: Éditions du Jour, 1972).

arrangements regarding alcohol, sex, labour, and protest experienced serious upheavals as the city expanded its authority. Second, municipal authorities operated with heteronormative frameworks that understood visual displays of sex as a threat to the social order. Over the course of several decades municipal leaders and police took steps to regulate and control the night by enacting bylaws and enforcing them in nightspots and in public space where women and queer community members of different races mingled. And third, because night was a time when different rules applied, and when power expanded and contracted, it became a time when people could contest the political order. Because the administration's project prioritized image over helping the most marginalized, nighttime became a terrain where the boundaries of authority were contested ferociously. Night thus became a time when the struggles over the future of society played out.

In researching the history of night I was forced to piece together fragments of history from numerous sources. In this way, my approach involved casting a wide net and attempting to find any and all references to the governance of night in Montreal, in archived print records, films, and artworks. The process led me to many fiction and non-fiction books and other published accounts in newspapers and magazines, as well as to many unique collections held at various institutional centres. The vast array of newspaper articles, government reports, magazines, and private and institutional archives serve well as an entry point into exploring how society has wrestled over nighttime's meaning and significance. At the time of writing municipal court documents and the vast majority of police reports after 1951 were unavailable,³⁵ which forced me to gain insight into various cleanup campaigns from alternative collections. Moreover, while I recognize how artificial light, circadian rhythms, show business and music,

³⁵ "Files produced from 1952 onward are restricted. Documents sealed in folders cannot be viewed." P076 Fonds Cour municipal de Montréal, AVM. <https://archivesdemontreal.ica-atom.org/fonds-de-la-cour-municipale-de-montreal-1867-2001-1895-1995>.

sports, and hedonism are moored to nighttime, I decided not to focus on these aspects in order to pay close attention to the loci of municipal power.

Chapter 1 begins by looking at how an informal nighttime economy took root in early-twentieth-century Montreal. It shows how social reformers repeatedly tried to curb illicit nightlife, but to no avail. Eventually Pax Plante and Jean Drapeau started a process that would uproot the city's most famous brothels and gambling dens and dismantle a network of corruption. The process, however, went much further as reformers strictly enforced rules and regulations that pertained to the press, liquor, and the taxi industry. In the span of a few months Montreal's nighttime economy had undergone serious reorganization. Although Montrealers voted Drapeau out of power in 1957, they re-elected him under the newly formed Civic Party in 1960. During his second term the increasing scale and capital intensity of the postwar economic boom produced an era of prosperity that permitted the city's rapid transformation into a "world-class" city. Its recasting involved the bulldozing of sections of low-income neighbourhoods to make way for new urban infrastructures.

Chapter 2 looks at the Civic Party's further reorganization of the nighttime economy in preparation for Expo 67. Weeks before the world's fair, and following police and news reports about dishonest practices in the service industry, the city passed a highly controversial "anti-mingling" bylaw, which prohibited employees from drinking, dancing, or sitting with customers. The anti-mingling bylaw allowed the city to crackdown on employees – particularly women – in nightclubs, bars, and cabarets. However, the bylaw's framework also allowed local police to enforce it based on moral norms and heteronormativity. Ultimately, police enforced the bylaw not necessarily where officers found dishonest employees, but in nightspots where Montrealers of different economic background, race, and sexual orientation mingled. By further regulating establishments serving alcohol, officials claimed to have made the nighttime

economy more honest, which enhanced Montreal's reputation as a suitable and safe tourist destination. The anti-mingling bylaw would have a profound ripple effect as it was cited as one of the reasons that pushed the province to form an inquiry into the alcohol beverage trade (Thinel Commission 1968-1971), and which ultimately led to the modernization of provincial liquor legislation.

Chapter 3 shows how the Civic Party's project of rule relied on the city's essential services by focusing on the police and fire departments' strikes of 1969 and 1974. The chapter highlights two important facts. First, it demonstrates the central role that the police and fire departments played in upholding Drapeau's vision of Montreal. Without these two departments, the municipal administration's hegemonic structure collapsed. Second, because of their role as custodians of order, the police and fire departments had a level of bargaining power unequaled by other sectors – an especially important fact in an era of political unrest and labour activism. Leading up to the strikes, Montreal police and fire departments promoted their cause vocally. Paradoxically, once on strike, it was their passivity that caused terror. In this sense nighttime played an indisputable role in the bargaining process.

Chapter 4 looks at the conflict over appropriate forms of nightlife and art in Montreal in the leadup to the 1976 Summer Olympics. The municipal administration demonstrated an intolerance of different ideas and lifestyles, exemplified by its crackdown on protest art, queer nightclubs and bars and, to a lesser extent, visible forms of sex work. Nighttime reproduced some forms of power, while also providing opportunities for resistance. Once again, the city was concerned with optics in an increasingly globalizing world. The pre-Olympic cleanup was a general attempt by the Civic Party to reaffirm hegemonic orthodoxy through surveillance, order, and so-called security in public space. Experiencing the Civic Party's rueful urban planning and its repressive tactics, activists challenged and fought urban order on city streets. By stifling

subversion in leftist art and sexual discourse, however, administrators gave momentum to activists who brought their challenges to the Quebec Superior Court.

Chapter 5 examines why, at the tail-end of Jean Drapeau's political career, the Civic Party launched an intense cleanup campaign against street-based sex work. It focuses on the administration's response to the proliferation of sex work in the late-1970s and early-1980s. During this period, the sex industry's visibility on city streets at night increased following a 1978 Supreme Court of Canada ruling that soliciting had to be "pressing and persistent" in order for sex workers to be charged. Because local police officers could not provide evidence that sex workers had been "pressing and persistent" during transactions, Montreal – like other Canadian cities – enacted its own anti-prostitution and anti-soliciting bylaws to circumvent the Criminal Code. This pan-Canadian contest over the right to prosecute sex workers led to passionate debates about the boundaries of the criminal justice system and the place of prostitution and pornography in society. Under these circumstances the governance of nighttime public space became a terrain where profound questions about gender and the right to the city emerged.

Chapter 1: Red Lights and Reforms, 1954-1965

In 1963 Montreal's Chamber of Commerce sent the mayor a study of the city's tourist industry. The study noted how some sectors like retail and hospitality were thriving, while others were stagnant. "The night club situation is generally very disappointing," the Chamber bemoaned. "There are very few quality shows," it went on, and "In this sense, everything has to be done."¹ For the Chamber, nightlife's lacklustre state was an economic problem, a missed opportunity to attract crowds of Montrealers and tourists who were eager to mix and spend money. That same year, in the leftist poetic journal *Liberté*, Thérèse Masson also lamented the state of Montreal's nightlife. Masson, in contrast to the Chamber, saw nightlife not in terms of its economic profitability, but in the way that it allowed daytime workers to regain a sense of self after a day of living in the hustle and bustle of the city.² Both had recognized that Montreal lacked access to an entertainment 'scene,' what Will Straw calls the "cozy intimacy of community and the fluid cosmopolitanism of urban life."³ Though they stood at different ends of the political spectrum, both had arrived at the same conclusion: the city had to do something to help spur its nightlife, which had reached its nadir.

Since the early-nineteenth-century, Montreal, like many other urban centres in Canada, had been a city where clandestine sex, gambling, and alcohol was readily available. As historian Mary Anne Poutanen has demonstrated in the case of sex, authorities were of two minds regarding the city's demimonde as they tried to strike a balance between regulating and punishing women for prostitution, while at the same time offering some form of protection to

¹ La chambre de Commerce du district de Montréal, *Une étude sur l'accueil touristique à son honneur le maire Jean Drapeau*, [dans le cadre de la] Semaine d'éducation touristique du 17 au 25 avril 1963, p.14. Fonds VM166, D142-A, (1963-1966), AVM.

² Thérèse Masson, "Montréal by night," *Liberté*. Vol. 5, no. 4 (juillet-août 1963), 355.

³ Masson's argument gives heed to the "two extremes" of the 'scene' described by Will Straw: the visible cityscape of nightclubs and bars and the sociology that allows them to thrive. "Scenes and Sensibilities," *Public: Art/Culture/Ideas*, 22-23 (2001), 248-250.

others because they understood the sex industry as a “necessary ‘evil’ that could protect respectable women from the worst excesses of men’s sexuality.”⁴ Therefore, police gradually allowed an underground economy to proliferate in what became known as the Red Light district, where it was estimated that three-quarters of all the city’s sex trade was located.⁵ The Red Light district was not dissimilar to other Canadian segregated vice districts of the nineteenth century; police tolerated and protected an underground economy that was structured along race-based hierarchies and heteronormativity.⁶ As I explain in detail further on in the chapter, during the first half of the twentieth century both urban politics and global conflicts swayed how authorities governed Montreal’s Red Light district. For more than half a century some reformers would try to stamp-out vice in that district, but to no avail because corrupt politicians and police officers allocated few resources to undermine organized crime, which allowed Montreal to flourish as one of the continent’s most active nightlife scenes from the 1920s to the 1950s.⁷

The gist of nightlife’s “decline” really began during the mid-twentieth-century when prosecutors and reformers started to pay attention to the relationship between municipal authorities and the underworld. Chief among those was city attorney Pacifique (Pax) Plante, who was promoted to head the Police Department’s Morality Squad in the mid-1940s. As the head of this unit he ordered officers to enforce the laws that his predecessors simply refused to

⁴ Mary Anne Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions: Prostitution in Early Nineteenth-Century Montreal* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015), 316-8.

⁵ Andrée Lévesque, *Making and Breaking the Rules: Women in Quebec, 1919-1939*, trans. Yvonne M. Klein (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 117. For more on the geography of vice and police protection see Rhonda L. Hinter, “The Oldest Profession in Winnipeg: The Culture of Prostitution in the Point Douglas Segregated District, 1909-1912,” *Manitoba History* (Spring 2001): 2-13.

⁶ For a full exploration of the role played by police in the spread of race-based hierarchies within the sex-trade in Western Canada see L.K. Bertram, “The Other Little House: The Brothel as a Colonial Institution on the Canadian Prairies, 1880-93,” *Journal of Social History* vol. 56, 1 (Fall 2022): 58-88.

⁷ Four major inquiries – Rainville (1894), Cannon (1909), Coderre (1924), and Cannon (1944) – had little effect. On early-twentieth-century nightlife see Nancy Marrelli, *Stepping Out: The Golden Age of Montreal Night Clubs, 1925-1955* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 2004). Vanessa Blais-Tremblay, “Jazz, Gender, Historiography: A Case Study of the “Golden Age” of Jazz in Montreal (1925-1955),” (PhD diss. (Music) McGill University, 2018).

uphold – like the closing time of drinking establishments and the regulations that controlled the taxi industry – and he directed surprise raids of gambling dens, speakeasies, and brothels. The culmination of Plante’s efforts, however, would arrive with the establishment of the Caron Inquiry (1950-1954), which provided irrefutable evidence that corrupt politicians and police officers had been enabling vice and immorality to thrive in the city. Justice Caron’s final report was submitted weeks before a municipal election, and this timeliness allowed the Civic Action League (CAL), a new reform party, to pull ahead and secure a historically significant victory. Headed by mayoral candidate Jean Drapeau, the CAL was elected on a platform that promised to transform Montreal into a “world-class” city by ending corruption.

As the chapter’s opening lines reveal, the extent of this transformation was criticized. “I felt a great joy of belonging to and participating in that unique universe,” recalled famous travelling burlesque performer and stripper Lili St-Cyr of 1940s and early-1950s Montreal, and professed that because of this sense of belonging she “considered Montreal [her] real homeland.”⁸ When she returned to the city in the mid-1960s, however, she discovered that that Montreal no longer existed. To her dismay, most of the places that she loved – cosmopolitan hubs of cultural exchange where sexual energy and desire fluttered in the night – had been bulldozed and replaced by vacant lots or modern buildings. “My Montreal was not this new city,” she longingly wrote.⁹ In fall 1963, several months after the Chamber of Commerce had submitted its study to the mayor, Montreal executive committee chair Lucien Saulnier plainly explained the administration’s plans for the city during a lunch organized by that same chamber: “In this present decade we’re in the process of building, in a way, a new city whose appearance

⁸ Lili St-Cyr with Louis-Jean d’Amour, *Ma vie de stripteaseuse* (1982; Outremont: Les Éditions Quebecor, 2005), 32.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 271, 274.

will easily throw into the shadows everything that has happened since the last world war.”¹⁰

Thus, during the early-1960s the municipal administration laid a firm program that would change the face of the city. In international outlets like the *New York Times*, the city bought advertisement space to promote itself as a “world-class” destination for both tourists and investors.¹¹

The (re)invention of Montreal during the 1950s happened in many official ways, but one of the most important of which was the re-organization of the nighttime economy. This chapter looks at the period of transition between Montreal’s two longest serving mayors, Camillien Houde and Jean Drapeau. In Mayor Houde’s city the underworld functioned largely unrestrained in nightclubs, brothels, and gambling dens – all of which were protected by city councillors and senior police officers who had been bought with bribes. However, when Mayor Drapeau was elected, honesty, morality, and reputation became the guiding principles of urban governance. These principles held the promise of transforming Montreal and bolstering its international reputation, and to this end the CAL generated a gendered and sexualized discourse about how the city looked and about how it *should* look, especially at night.¹² Ultimately, the city at night became a battleground over changing ideas of moral order. Throughout its mandate, from 1954 to 1957, the CAL coordinated with the Police Department to clear immorality from the city, which included seizing pinball machines and pornographic literature as well as shutting down dingy alleyway speakeasies and lavish brothels.¹³ Altogether, this chapter argues that regaining control of Montreal’s nighttime economy – and purging it of illicit and disreputable

¹⁰ “Le président Lucien Saulnier ‘rêve’ d’un Montréal à la grandeur de l’île pour 1967,” *Le Devoir*, 30 October 1963. Two years later *Le Devoir* published a lengthy special issue on the city’s transformation, “Montréal, ville dynamique,” 19 June 1965.

¹¹ “Montreal on the move!,” *New York Times*, 19 November 1961. Fonds VM166, D142-A (Avant 1963), AVM.

¹² Lapointe *Nettoyer Montréal*, 16. See also Mathieu Lapointe, “‘Beaucoup trop Chicago’: la campagne de moralité publique Montréalaise dans ses contextes internationaux,” *Bulletin d’histoire politique*, 24, 1 (2015): 26.

¹³ As historian Viviane Namaste stresses, though seemingly disparate each element was linked to the same reformist ideology. Namaste, *Imprimés interdits*, 45-6.

activities – allowed Mayor Drapeau to mould Montreal into his vision of a modern city.

However, by destroying the informal economy and rigorously enforcing laws and regulations to control nighttime, the municipal administration put an end to an older version of Montreal's nightlife.

Nighttime in Ville-Marie and the Red Light district

Throughout most of the modern era the flickering flame of lamp and candle cast a feeble candescence into the unknown darkness of the night. But during the nineteenth century technological change in the quality of light began transforming how night was experienced, especially in urban centres. Historians have illustrated the interplay between cities, modernity, and industrialization to show how night was filled with contradictions during this period. These contradictions are characterized by liberty and restriction or fantasy and fear, and were marked by many factors like one's class, race, sex, or religion and the way authorities upheld regulations.¹⁴ Equally important was the increasing organization of daytime work and nighttime leisure under industrial capitalism. Along with new sounds, smells, and textures, this new system of production profoundly affected the daily rhythm of people as they became bound to factory time.¹⁵

Mid-nineteenth-century Montreal was not unlike most industrialized cities. During this period, Montreal – as the economic, demographic, and industrial capital of Canada – witnessed

¹⁴ Joachim Schlör, *Nights in the Big City: Paris, Berlin, London, 1840-1930* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998). Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night: The Industrialization of Light in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). Peter C. Baldwin, *In the Watches of the Night: Life in the Nocturnal City, 1820-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

¹⁵ E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past & Present* no. 38 (December 1967): 56-97. Gregory S. Kealey and Bryan D. Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario, 1880-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 36-9.

electric light for the first time. Later, by the turn of the twentieth century, it witnessed the industrialization of light, which spread across urban space to delineate central landmarks like streets, train stations, churches, squares, and public buildings.¹⁶ Industrial light gave the city a certain legibility and navigability after sundown, but on the whole night still retained darkness so that it remained filled with unknowns. Around each street corner one could find criminal activity or romance, religious processions or friendly bootleggers.

In the first half of the twentieth century industrial light began expanding from public landmarks to places of commerce, like cafés, taverns, cinemas, theatres, and bars, which gave rise to new patterns of work and leisure.¹⁷ Nighttime leisure would cement a network connecting a world of taxis, hotels, restaurants, nightclubs, with alcohol consumption, sex, and dancing. Within the Canadian context this rise in commercial amusement can be understood in the number of motion picture theatres, which doubled from 1930 to 1950.¹⁸ Other commercial establishments, like taverns, restaurants, and nightclubs were also on the rise, especially in prohibition-free Montreal.¹⁹ In these alcohol-fueled establishments Montrealers and tourists interacted and were wowed by capable performers – male, female, queer, drag, and racialized – who took the stage to dance, sing, and act. In some tearooms, jazz bars, speakeasies, or queer nightclubs, heterosexual whites sought sensual novelties by “slumming.”²⁰ Most often “slumming” occurred in Black clubs, like the Terminal Club, Rockhead’s Paradise, and Café

¹⁶ John Irwin Cooper, *Montreal: A Brief History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1969), 108-9; Sherry Olson, “‘A Profusion of Light’ in Nineteenth-Century Montreal,” in *Espace et culture / Space and Culture*, ed. Serge Courville and Normand Séguin (Sainte-Foy: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1995), 253-64. Valeria Téllez Niemeyer, “Nuit électrique: atmosphères lumineuses à Montréal au XIXe siècle,” *RACAR* 45 (2020): 36-48.

¹⁷ Nicolas Kenny, “City Glow: Streetlights, Emotions, and Nocturnal Life, 1880s-1910s,” *Journal of Urban History* 43, 1 (2017): 103.

¹⁸ In 1950 there were more new theatres that opened in Quebec than in any other province, and, with eighty-three motion picture theatres, Montreal ranked second behind Toronto’s 124 theatres. *Motion Picture Theatres, Exhibitors and Distributors 1950* (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1952), R-9.

¹⁹ Michael M. Hawrysh, “Une ville bien arrosée : Montréal Durant l’ère de la prohibition (1920-1933),” (M.A. thesis (History), Université de Montréal, 2014), 54.

²⁰ Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 7-8.

Saint Michel, where audiences could see and hear sizzling entertainment.²¹ Famous nightlife columnist and reporter Al Palmer claimed that there was “no color line [back] then,” as interracial crowds and acts mingled in those Little Burgundy nightclubs.²² But while many Black club owners relied on a white clientele for the bulk of their business, white club owners made Black patrons feel distinctly unwelcome downtown, sometimes outright refusing them entry. Although no formal segregation laws existed in Canada, Blacks were often barred from public places like these venues as well as restaurants, theatres, and dance halls.²³

For a century Montreal’s uncontested epicentre of nighttime entertainment was its Red Light district. Palmer noted how this district was equally a magnet for slumming: “It is not unusual for Montreal’s Upper Strata to organize an evening in the district for the simple purpose of mingling with the shady characters.”²⁴ Delineated by Sherbrooke, Craig (present-day Saint-Antoine), Saint-Urbain, and Saint-Denis streets, the Red Light district was where society’s different classes and ethnicities came to intermix in clubs, bars, illegal gambling dens, or any of the hundreds of brothels.²⁵ During its heyday, in the early-twentieth-century, many young women and men came to the district to find adventure, anonymity, and, of course, money. Indeed, sex work earnings appeared very attractive for young unskilled and uneducated women who came to the city to work in laundries and sweatshops or as domestics.²⁶ As nighttime

²¹ Meilan Lam (dir.), *Show Girls* (Montreal: National Film Board, 1998). Joanna Mansbridge, “In Search of a Different History: The Remains of Burlesque in Montreal,” *Canadian Theatre Review*, vol. 158 (Spring 2014): 8.

²² Al Palmer, *Montreal Confidential*, (Montréal: Véhicule Press, [1950] 2009), 66.

²³ John Gilmore, *Swinging in Paradise: The Story of Jazz in Montréal* (Victoria: Ellipse Editions, 2011), 167. For more on informal segregation see Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

²⁴ Palmer, *Montreal Confidential*, 80.

²⁵ According to Lévesque there was somewhere between one to three hundred brothels in the Red Light district. Lévesque, *Making and Breaking the Rules*, 118.

²⁶ Ibid., 119-121. See Danielle Gauvreau, Sherry Olson, and Patricia Thornton, “The Harsh Welcome of an Industrial City: Immigrant Women in Montreal, 1880-1900,” *Histoire sociale / Social History* vol. 40 (November 2007): 345-80.

practices became entrenched into cultural systems, administrators and social reformers began arguing that leisure and entertainment was a rejection of work ethic, discipline, and authority.²⁷

By the 1920s the Red Light district became the target of social reformers who embarked on a campaign to curtail the sex trade. In 1924 a pressure group named the Committee of Sixteen (1918-1926) hired detectives from Chicago – itself a city notorious for its dark underworld – to investigate sin in Montreal.²⁸ Upon inspection the two detectives, George O. Hadick and Alexander Schwaren, concluded that Montreal was “the most wide, the most open town [we] have ever seen... the rottenest town [we] have ever been in.”²⁹ The detectives had in large part confirmed the allegations made by the Committee of Sixteen; they saw collusion between the Police Department and the criminal underworld. Soon thereafter, the Quebec Superior Court commissioned an inquiry to discern how Montreal’s Police Department and its elected officials protected criminals from prosecution. Held over several months in 1924-1925, the Coderre Inquiry revealed rampant corruption and a deplorable state of affairs within the Police Department and at City Hall. However, the municipal administration dismissed all recommendations and instead opted to uphold the system that combined surveillance and toleration of vice in the Red Light district.³⁰ Therefore, unlike most North American cities that had been swept by reformist policies during the early decades of the twentieth century, Montreal and its Red Light district weathered the conservative storm.³¹

²⁷ Tamara Myers, “Deserting Daughters: Runaways and the Red Light District of Montreal before 1945,” in *Child Welfare and Social Action: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, eds. Pat Starkey and Jon Lawrence (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001), 28.

²⁸ See Karen Herland, “Organized Righteousness Against Organized Viciousness: Constructing Prostitution in Post World War I Montreal,” (M.A. thesis (Art History and Communication Studies), McGill University, 2005).

²⁹ The Committee of Sixteen had established links with American reformers who were preoccupied with these urban issues. Quoted in Andrée Lévesque, “Éteindre le *Red Light*: les réformateurs et la prostitution à Montréal entre 1865 et 1925,” *Urban History Review / Revue d’histoire urbaine*, vol. XVII, no. 3 (February 1989): 196.

³⁰ Lévesque, *Making and Breaking the Rules*, 131. For more on the inquiry see Brodeur, *La délinquance de l’ordre*.

³¹ Charlebois and Lapointe, *Scandale!*, 97-8. See Hunt, “Regulating Heterosocial Space.”

Despite what American crime busters had to say about vice in Montreal, the Red Light district was home to a wide variety of residents. Many working-class families lived there and left their unsupervised children running and playing along the streets. Unchaperoned teenaged girls wandered alone or in groups looking for fun. And, as historian Tamara Myers writes, though they did meet misfortunes and danger, they also found jobs, temporary lodgings, and pleasure in the district.³² “Cobblers, grocers and restaurant keepers go about the task of educating their children in these surroundings, and if they are not unaware of the goings-on they are at least indifferent to them,” wrote one *Maclean's* reporter.³³ Adding to the Red Light's bustling assemblage is the fact that it abutted the Quartier Latin, the city's francophone student district and home to Université Laval's Montreal campus from 1876 to 1919. In 1919 a papal charter from Pope Benedict XV granted full autonomy to the campus, and the following year it received its civil charter from the Quebec Legislative Assembly and adopted the name Université de Montréal. The institution would remain in the neighbourhood until 1943, at which point it relocated to Mount Royal's slopy summit.

By being close to a university campus, and by virtue of its proximity to the port, the Red Light district thrived as an important site of both homosexual and heterosexual sociability. Alcohol and drugs fuelled transients, and students roamed the neighbourhood looking for cheap brothels, vaudeville theatres, jazz clubs, and restaurants.³⁴ Taxi drivers who were well acquainted with the city's underbelly and its discreet pleasures knew that this was the place to drive rambunctious youths who wished to purchase sex.³⁵ This deal benefited both parties because drivers often received a cut from the business. Indeed, within the Red Light district

³² Tamara Myers, *Caught: Montreal's Modern Girls and the Law, 1869-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 169-74.

³³ Blair Gilmour, “St. Lawrence-Main,” *Maclean's*, 15 September 1940.

³⁴ See Daniel Proulx, *Le Red Light de Montréal* (Montreal: VLB éditeur, 1997).

³⁵ Charlebois and Lapointe, *Scandale!*, 143. Danielle Lacasse, *La Prostitution féminine à Montréal, 1945-1970* (Montreal: Boréal, 1994), 131.

pleasure seekers could walk up to any building with a red light hanging in the portico and enter a brothel. This visual display was even more clear when men queued along sidewalks while sex workers, standing in the doorway or at a windowsill, waved them in one at a time. Lodged in tenement rows or walk-up apartments, the brothels served a dual purpose as workplace and home for many sex workers. Numerous residents remembered how this underworld – run by madams and gambling kingpins – made the district a welcoming and safe neighbourhood.³⁶ This, however, does not mean that it was devoid of violent crime. As Daniel Proulx shows, violent incidents involving the criminal underworld would be settled whenever and wherever possible. For instance, after cooperating with a police investigation into the drug trade and crossing notorious gambling kingpin Harry Davis, Charlie Feigenbaum was shot six times in broad daylight in 1933.³⁷

Officers were familiar with the women and men of the Red Light district and took advantage of certain privileges before making an arrest. For instance, they relied on insider knowledge to build a case, especially against discreet illegal venues like speakeasies or blind pigs. And this cooperation, notes historian Andrée Lévesque, guaranteed smooth business for some.³⁸ The heads of the underground economy made heaps of money through gambling, alcohol, and sex by paying off the right police officers. At the same time, they relied on each other too. Sex workers were protected from the justice system and hostile clients by powerful and influential madams. It was a dangerous and perilous universe with clear hierarchy, which involved the risk of sexually transmitted infection, unwanted pregnancy resulting in abortion, substance abuse, and violent clients.³⁹ Effectively, well to do madams were businessowners and

³⁶ Charlebois and Linteau, *Quartiers disparus*, 78, 82, 90.

³⁷ Daniel Proulx, *Les bas-fonds de Montréal* (Montreal: VLB éditeur, 1998), 11-3.

³⁸ Lévesque, *Making and Breaking the Rules*, 129.

³⁹ During the early-twentieth-century condoms, vaginal sponges, and douches provided a degree of protection while Salvarsan was used against infections. *Ibid.*, 125-6.

their industry was managed by housekeepers. Apart from the sex workers themselves, clients would have interacted mostly with housekeepers as they were the ones who maintained order. Some large houses had two or three housekeepers splitting twenty-four-hour shifts. Elsewhere, bookmakers connected with gamblers via telephone. Often, employees of restaurants, nightclubs, and taverns acted as middlemen by placing bets for clients over the phone.⁴⁰ Gambling kingpins like Harry Davis, Harry Ship, Julius Silverberg, Vic Cotroni, or Armand Courville controlled a small army that contributed to the underground economy by funneling money through 250 gambling dens. The clientele inside these establishments reflected mid-twentieth-century cosmopolitanism as French, British, Chinese, Polish, Russian, Czech, and Jewish gamblers intermingled around tables, especially around the most popular game – *barbotte*, a Middle Eastern dice game that was immensely popular in Montreal.⁴¹

At the political centre of this “wide-open” city was a colossal and flamboyant man, Montreal mayor Camillien Houde. In 1928 Houde, a Conservative member of the provincial legislature since 1923, challenged and defeated Médéric Martin – Montreal’s third longest serving mayor and well-known Liberal. From that moment forward Houde would serve on and off as mayor until 1954.⁴² The one universally known as *Mr. Montréal* was described by eminent Montreal writer Hugh MacLennan as capable of expressing the city’s “spirit of wit, tolerance, perversity, cynicism, gaiety, bawdiness, gallantry, delight in living and—make no error here—dignity.”⁴³ Although he is mostly known for right wing populism, Houde’s politics were never anchored in any concrete philosophy. In fact, his scandalous political contradictions

⁴⁰ Proulx, *Le Red Light de Montréal*, 33.

⁴¹ Lapointe, *Nettoyer Montréal*, 325. Morton, *At Odds*, 5. Charlebois and Lapointe, *Scandale!*, 150-3.

⁴² Houde served as mayor from 1928 to 1932, 1934 to 1936, 1938 to 1940, and 1944 to 1954. At the provincial level Houde served as MPP for the Conservative Party of Quebec (1923-1927) and, later, as its leader (1929-1932). He also won a seat as an independent MP in Papineau (1949-1953) while he was mayor of Montreal. See Claude Dupont, “Camillien Houde, politicien de carrière,” (M.A. thesis (History), University of Ottawa, 1972).

⁴³ Hugh MacLennan, “A Shiver When an Era Ends,” *Saturday Night*, 9 October 1954. Donald Brittain, Marrin Canell, and Robert Duncan (dirs.), *His Worship, Mr. Montréal* (Montreal: National Film Board, 1976).

reached an apex during World War II when he – a royalist who held his interactions with the Queen with pride – openly encouraged young men not to register under the National Resources Mobilization Act. Because he defied the federal government’s campaign Houde was arrested and remained interned for four years (from August 1940 to August 1944) at Petawawa and Fredericton, which made him a wartime hero in the eyes of many French Canadians.⁴⁴

During the Second World War sailors stationed in Montreal’s port would make their way up Saint Laurent Boulevard toward the Red Light district.⁴⁵ Montrealers, tourists, military men, dockworkers, and many others flocked to the district to experience “wide-open” Montreal. Montreal was officially focused on war production and because of this economic influx other sectors – like the nighttime economy – were doing good business. Indeed, during wartime, Montreal held the extraordinary benefit of full employment and prosperity which in turn led to the increase of its population. Fondly remembering those years, burlesque performer and stripper Lili St-Cyr (who arrived in Montreal during the winter of 1944), stated that men and women from all over the world would mingle, dance, and relax in Montreal nightclubs. Those who came to see her shows were awestruck by the romanticism, passion, and sexual seduction she conveyed on-stage. In a rather amusing anecdote, which reveals the extent of her shows’ influence on patrons, a team of scientists undertaking nuclear research in collaboration with the Manhattan Project – presumably those from the Montreal Laboratory – named a radiation detection instrument “the Lili” and an improved version of it, “the Superlili.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Claude-V. Marsolais, “Les inclinations fascistes de Camillien Houde et son internement durant la guerre,” *Bulletin d’histoire politique* vol. 3 nos. 3-4 (Summer 1995): 154-5.

⁴⁵ See Patricia Burns, “Montreal: A Helluva Town,” in *Life on the Home Front: Montreal 1939-1945* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 2012), 177-99. Weintraub, “War: The Home Front,” in *City Unique*, 27-58.

⁴⁶ St-Cyr, *Ma vie de stripteaseuse*, 158. For more on the connection between Montreal and the Manhattan Project see Donald H. Avery, “Atomic Scientific Co-operation and Rivalry Among Allies: The Anglo-Canadian Montreal Laboratory and the Manhattan Project, 1943-1946,” *War in History* vol. 2, no. 3 (November 1995): 274-305.

During the war the provincial government tried but failed to curtail vice, and nightlife more generally. It limited the number of liquor permits for Montreal, but this solution was meaningless because hundreds of establishments already had permits and, additionally, Montrealers and tourists easily could find alcohol in clandestine and after-hour speakeasies and blind pigs.⁴⁷ Gambling thrived as well. Since unofficial economies by definition escape from official documentation, we can only guess at its size, but journalist William Weintraub later estimated that gambling grossed \$100 million a year making it the city's second largest industry, right behind the manufacturing of women's clothing. Many "clean" police officers who monitored the city's underground economy at an arm's length found that all this commotion had become hard to manage. Moreover, alongside general criminal activity, officers also had to handle various exceptional wartime measures, like safeguarding strategic locations from foreign enemies (such as factories) or were tasked with special nighttime surveillance (during partially blackouts imposed as a shield against enemy attack).⁴⁸ Bad behaving boys and girls who roamed streets loitering and looting or who lost their moral sense while the city was under the cover of darkness, placed additional demands on officers. This "juvenile delinquency panic" led to the successful passage of a curfew bylaw in September 1942.⁴⁹ In fact, during the war the role of the average police officer evolved at such a dramatic pace that by 1943 the city's Police Department demanded the right to unionize, which (as I briefly outline in Chapter 3) led to a short-lived police strike.

In mid-January 1944, the Canadian army pressured Montreal authorities to clampdown on the Red Light because cases of syphilis and gonorrhoea had surged to an epidemic level

⁴⁷ Weintraub, *City Unique*, 85. Gilmore, *Swinging in Paradise*, 187.

⁴⁸ Jean Turmel, *Le Service de police de la cité de Montréal (1909-1971) : étude rétrospective sur son organisation* (Montreal: La Section Recherche et Planification du Service de Police de la C.U.M., 1971), 170.

⁴⁹ City of Montréal, By-law No. 1715, *By-law concerning the curfew* (2 September 1942). Tamara Myers, *Youth Squad: Policing Children in the Twentieth Century* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 58.

(nearly three times the national average). Army officials threatened to remove cash-suffused troops from the city and make Montreal completely out-of-bounds for its personnel if things remained “wide-open.”⁵⁰ According to Major-General Ernest James Renaud the principal source of infections could be traced back to nighttime establishments where civilians and military personnel mingled: brothels, rooming houses, hotels, restaurants, taverns, dance halls, and nightclubs. Renaud also blamed nighttime labourers like taxi drivers, bartenders, concierges, maître d’hôtels, and pimps as facilitating connections and transactions. Montreal chief of police Fernand Dufresne responded to the army’s demand by increasing Night Patrol and Morality Squad surveillance in “problematic” areas.⁵¹ While there was a general emphasis on brothels in the Red Light district, the issue – as the major-general and the chief of police both recognized – was much larger and concerned the whole of Montreal’s nighttime economy. Mayor Adhémar Raynault, a political protégé of Maurice Duplessis who served during Camillien Houde’s internment, held off a city-wide cleanup, however, because in his mind brothels acted as a necessary evil that held back the proliferation of crimes; shutting down brothels, he claimed, could lead to a rise in a multitude of other problems.⁵² One municipal judge echoed the mayor’s logic when he told a *Maclean’s* reporter: “For me, [brothels are] the lesser evil. Close these places and you send the girls on the street. That is worse.”⁵³

⁵⁰ “If a tremendous improvement is not forthcoming in this regard in the very near future, we will be forced to resort to very drastic action, such as placing Montreal out-of-bounds for all troops not actually serving here.” *Minutes of a Conference held at headquarters, – Military district number four, Montreal Qué. On the 13th of January, 1944 in connection with Venereal Disease Control*, 1. Fonds Commission d’enquête présidée par le juge François Caron. 1925-1957, P043, S4, SS2, D02 – Maladies vénériennes (1942-1952), AVM.

In a revealing anecdote, crime buster Pax Plante recalled that a university medical science professor told him that “at least 80 percent of students have had a sexually transmitted infection.” Stanké, Morgan, and Plante, *Pax, lutte à finir avec la pègre*, 132. Andrée Lévesque notes that during the depression the Federal government had halved its contribution to combatting sexually transmitted infections despite the increase of cases. Lévesque *Making and Breaking the Rules*, 127.

⁵¹ Letter from Dufresne to Renaud on 1 February 1944. Fonds Commission d’enquête présidée par le juge François Caron. 1925-1957, P043, S4, SS2, D02 – Maladies vénériennes (1942-1952), AVM.

⁵² McKenna and Purcell, *Drapeau*, 84.

⁵³ Blair Fraser, “VD... No. 1 Saboteur,” *Maclean’s*, 15 February 1944. “This is What VD Costs!,” *Maclean’s*, 1 March 1944.

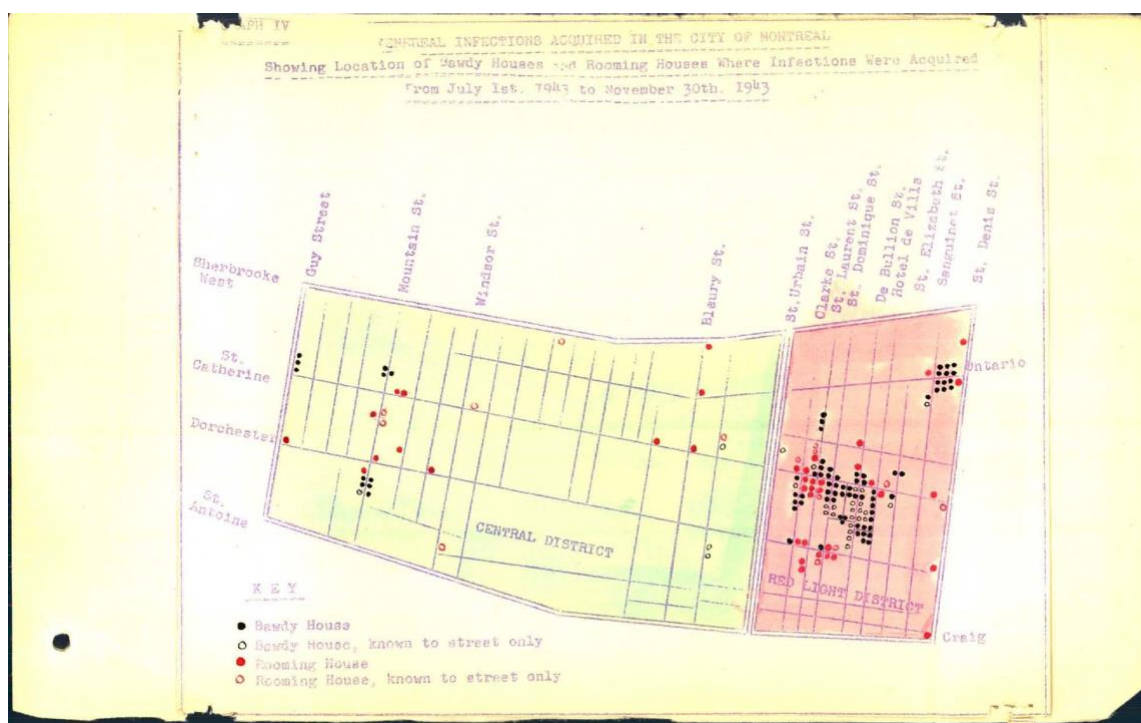


Figure 1: A 1943 map of bawdy houses and rooming houses in the Central District (left) and Red Light district (right). According to an army report sexually transmitted infections in Montreal could be traced back to these alongside other establishments like restaurants, dance halls, nightclubs, and hotels. Minutes of a Conference held at headquarters, – Military district number four, Montreal Qué. On the 13th of January, 1944 in connection with Venereal Disease Control, (appendix).

In a surprising twist, and because they had no other choice, brothels unanimously agreed to cease activities on 2 February 1944. “Fortunately,” wrote Chief Dufresne to the chair of the executive committee, “we did not have to take the radical and illegal means that we previously discussed.” He continued, explaining how and why these establishments had closed their doors: “Municipal court judges decided to impose very heavy prison sentences and fines on those whom the police would arrest and as a result, almost all brothels and gambling houses have closed.”⁵⁴ The Police Department’s official narrative likely concealed certain truths about the events because the underworld always had been able to dodge prison sentences and fines. Obviously more was happening behind the scenes than this version acknowledged. In fact, criminologist Jean-Paul Brodeur argues that the end to prohibited activities was not orchestrated

⁵⁴ Letter from Dufresne to Asselin, 13 March 1944, P043, S4, SS2, D02 – Maladies vénériennes (1942-1952), AVM.

by madams or gambling kingpins but by the landlords who had ordered tenants to cease their illicit businesses because they could not afford the devastating economic impact of a city-wide ban on military personnel.⁵⁵

Later that year, a commission was launched to investigate the Montreal divisions of the Quebec Provincial Police and the Quebec Liquor Police. Presided by Justice Lucien Cannon, the commission revealed that there was deep-seated “commercialized vice” within the Montreal Police Department.⁵⁶ These revelations paved the way for the creation of a new reformist group called the Ligue de vigilance sociale. Once again, however, the group’s requests for a thorough city-wide cleanup, one that would begin with the underworld and work its way up to corrupt politicians and police officers fell flat; by 1946 the group completely disappeared from public view.⁵⁷

Although the underworld’s grip over the city had waned during World War II it re-emerged following Camillien Houde’s return from internment and was strengthened after his successful 1944 election campaign.⁵⁸ Further, after wrangling with Duplessis for years, Houde became a firm ally, and together they established political stability. Under these circumstances, police officers tolerated unlicensed nightclubs, gambling, and sex work during this prosperous postwar period as they – and the heads of the underworld – made money from the underground economy. “Everybody was so happy, and everybody lived like a human being should live,”

⁵⁵ Brodeur, *La délinquance de l'ordre*, 166-7.

⁵⁶ Lucien Cannon, *Rapport de la Commission Royale nommée pour s'enquérir des activités de la Sûreté provinciale et de la Police des liqueurs, dans le district de Montréal, depuis le 26 août 1936 jusqu'au 15 mars 1944*. (Quebec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1944).

⁵⁷ The group’s first request filed in December 1945, as well as its second – filed in October 1946, had been rejected due to imprecise indictments of corruption. Turmel, *Le Service de police de la cité de Montréal (1909-1971)*, 179-82. Charlebois and Lapointe, *Scandale!*, 206.

⁵⁸ According to incumbent mayor Adhémar Raynault, who had been clamping down on illicit activities during WWII, the underworld overwhelmingly funded Houde’s campaign. Although he ran for mayor several times after – as described in his bitter autobiography – he would end up devoting the rest of his life to smalltime livestock farming in Repentigny. Adhémar Raynault, *Témoin d'une époque* (Montreal: Éditions du Jour, 1970), 171-83.

remembered detective-sergeant Fred Savage of the period.⁵⁹ This zeitgeist was captured by Arthur Burrows and Jean Palardy in *Montreal by Night* (1947), a short film that shows how night was a moment when off-duty migrant factoryworkers, board directors, and lawyers could connect, discuss, play games, and spend money.⁶⁰ The tourist industry reflected this liberty too. Brochures lauded the city's good restaurants and shopping opportunities and referred to its cosmopolitanism as adventurous, exotic, and exciting. But as historian Nicole Neatby notes, the travel writers would begin to recognize the limits of the city's "racy" pleasures. In newspapers and magazines they wrote about Montreal's bad reputation as "Canada's largest and gaudiest playboy [where] night life... is gay and practically uninhibited."⁶¹ Stuart Keate of *Maclean's* echoed this view writing that Montreal was known as one of the "most gaudy, bawdy cities in North America."⁶² Houde's personality dominated city politics from 1944 to 1954 and during this period his administration, along with the police department, became entangled in these aspects of Montreal nightlife, profiting from clandestine sex, alcohol, and gambling.

Crime Busting Reformers

*Throw the spotlight on ... those who flee light.*⁶³
– Pacifique (Pax) Plante

Montreal at night would remain "wide-open" until city attorney Pax Plante burst onto the scene. During his youth, Plante had been an earnest and dedicated student; while his classmates cavorted from lecture halls to the Red Light district, he remained studious and befriended Lucien L'Allier, Claude Robillard, and André Laurendeau – men who, in their own right, would

⁵⁹ Brittain, Canell, and Duncan, *His Worship, Mr. Montréal*.

⁶⁰ Arthur Burrows and Jean Palardy (dirs.), *Montreal by Night* (Montreal: National Film Board, 1947).

⁶¹ Wallace Ward, "The Quebec of the Visitors," *Saturday Night*, vol. 67 (12 July 1952). Quoted in Nicole Neatby, "Meeting of Minds: North American Travel Writers and Government Tourist Publicity in Quebec, 1920-1955," *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, vol. 36, no. 72 (November 2003): 490.

⁶² Stuart Keate, "The Unhorsed Galahad of Montreal," *Maclean's*, 15 July 1948.

⁶³ Stanké, Morgan, and Plante, *Pax, lutte à finir avec la pègre*, 97.

also play important public roles in the future of Quebec. He eventually trained as a lawyer and became renowned for his sartorial elegance and dapper lifestyle, enjoying the finer things in life, like silk clothing, good wine, and high culture and mentioned – repeatedly – that yachting was his favourite sport. As a zealous police attorney, Plante had seen how corrupt politicians and police officers had enabled commercialized vice in the city.⁶⁴ To shake things up the attorney decided to set himself up for promotion after a position had opened following a series of sensational events; Harry Davis, the underworld’s uncontested kingpin, was murdered by gunshot on 25 July 1946 and following a great amount of scandalous publicity Chief Dufresne fired Arthur Taché of the Morality Squad on 30 July. Plante seized this opportunity by securing a nomination from city councillor – and future chair of the executive committee – Pierre Des Marais. He told the politician that he would uproot the “whole comedy” that he had seen on display at the municipal court during his eight years as an attorney. With this political backing, Plante replaced Taché as head of the Morality Squad on 9 August.⁶⁵ Journalists immediately began reporting that Plante’s stylish demeanor and lavish allure was “pure radio-serial gangbuster stuff.”⁶⁶ They noted that his by-the-book attitude, which targeted *all* segments of the underworld – from medical professionals administering sexually transmitted infection tests for madams to fund-seeking reverends who organized clandestine bingo “lotteries” – had made him the target of infamous mobsters who would attempt to murder him on several occasions, despite the presence of bodyguards.⁶⁷

At the head of the Morality Squad Plante immediately pursued regulations that effectively ended business for after-hours establishments, something his predecessors had

⁶⁴ Plante served as an attorney-clerk at the municipal court from 1939 to 1946. Plante, *Montréal sous le règne de la pègre*, 8.

⁶⁵ Turmel, *Le Service de police de la cité de Montréal (1909-1971)*, 182; Lapointe, *Nettoyer Montréal*, 164.

⁶⁶ Stuart Keate, “The Unhorsed Galahad of Montreal,” *Macleans*, 15 July 1948.

⁶⁷ Stanké, Morgan, and Plante, *Pax, lutte à finir avec la pègre*, 159-60. Leon Harris, “Former crime-buster ‘Pax’ Plante back, has book on Quebec’s justice situation,” *Montreal Gazette*, 10 September 1971. Morton, *At Odds*, 173.

refused to enforce. Although most nightclubs, restaurants, hotels, bars, and cabarets owned legal alcohol permits, many establishments brushed off the section of the permit regulating the time when drinks could be served. Business owners viewed the Quebec Liquor Board's 1941 law – which banned the sale of alcohol in Montreal between 2:00 A.M. and 8:00 A.M. – as a nuisance that limited profits for no apparent reason other than moral control over the population.⁶⁸ Al Palmer even wrote that this regulation had been, throughout WWII and up until Pax Plante's rigorous enforcement, a mere suggestion: “The legal curfew hour in Montreal is two ayem [*sic*] – but don't pay too much attention to it. Most spots stay open till the last customer has left.”⁶⁹ Some spots remained open until 5:00 A.M. and others simply never closed. Jazz musician Fred McHugh recalled how he and his bandmates could performed at all hours: “Every night you would go somewhere. The clubs were open twenty-four hours. We used to play in the Black Magic Room of the Chez Patee on Stanley Street. We used to get out of there at nine o'clock in the morning. The regular band would finish at four. It was open to musicians to jam, and all the night people would come by – taxi drivers, waiters, hookers, and dancers.”⁷⁰ However, for Plante the temporal regulation of nighttime establishments was as important as any other rule, especially since drunken revellers often created a noisy environment at a time when most law-abiding workers would have been sleeping. In fact, Plante would hear from law-abiding hotel owners about embarrassing incidents involving loud brothel and gambling den solicitors who kept hotel guests – representatives of countries the world over, including royalty, diplomats, and ambassadors – awake at night.⁷¹

⁶⁸ *Loi modifiant la Loi des liqueurs alcooliques*, 9 May 1941. Lois annuelles du Québec, Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée nationale du Québec.

⁶⁹ Palmer, *Montreal Confidential*, 135.

⁷⁰ Cited in Gilmore, *Swinging in Paradise*, 176.

⁷¹ Plante, *Montréal sous le règne de la pègre*, 9. Stuart Keate, “The Unhorsed Galahad of Montreal,” *Maclean's*, 15 July 1948. Letter from Pax Plante to F. Dusseault, 18 December 1947. P043, S4, SS2, D02 – Maladies vénériennes (1942-1952), AVM.

Although Plante energetically pursued his duties against the underworld, his focus was emphatically on dishonest public officials. For him, police corruption remained a key problem. Corrupt officers warned illicit businessowners and managers about oncoming raids and, armed with that knowledge, offenders used “stand-ins” to take the fall on their behalf. Meanwhile, officers made no attempt to discern the mastermind behind the clandestine business.⁷² For instance, the 1925 Coderre Inquiry revealed that one or two brothel employees were routinely charged and fined. As madams settled those fines on-the-spot and negotiated their employee’s release, sex workers continued to work in rooms that police deliberately avoided.⁷³ It was easy to see how these “raids” were elaborate charades designed to persuade the public that something was being done to combat rampant vice. In reality, corrupt officers did not disrupt business operations.

As the head of the Morality Squad, Plante upended these practices. He targeted the city’s most infamous gambling dens to prove that he – unlike his predecessors – could monitor Montreal’s nighttime economy without being bought by the underworld.⁷⁴ Officers who spent their nights patrolling the city amassed new and often-unusual knowledge about the underworld, and they used that knowledge to enhance their efficiency in the field. In the span of eighteen months, he had won a national reputation as a hard-hitting and incorruptible opponent of the city’s underworld, something the Police Department had failed to achieve in half a century. Plante’s approach had been successful because of his belief in justice and morality, but also because of his sophisticated understanding of the nighttime economy. For example, he targeted taxi drivers who acted as key intermediators and enabled an interconnectivity between illicit

⁷² Ken Johnstone, “How Plante and Drapeau Licked the Montreal Underworld,” *Maclean’s*, 1 December 1954, 13.

⁷³ D’Amours and Keshen, “La campagne de prévention des infections transmises sexuellement durant la Second Guerre mondiale,” 107. Stanké, Morgan, and Plante, *Pax, lutte à finir avec la pègre*, 143.

⁷⁴ Charlebois and Lapointe, *Scandale!*, 206.

businesses. A mid-twentieth-century sociological study of the taxi industry shows how drivers were intimately connected to doormen, waiters, sex workers, bootleggers, bookies, and police officers.⁷⁵

The importance of the taxi industry during this period should not be overlooked since city permits skyrocketed from 848 in 1945 to 4,295 in 1952, which forced the city to modernize the structures governing the taxi industry.⁷⁶ Montreal responded quickly by enacting a lengthy bylaw in 1946 that mostly defined how taxi drivers could not behave: no unnecessary honking, no soliciting, no parking outside designated zones, no driving in search of passengers (*cruising*), no smoking, etc.⁷⁷ And so, when Plante took control of the Morality Squad, he made sure that police officers enforced this bylaw to a tee, including the sections that some officers found superfluous. He increased police surveillance of city streets by cracking down on taxi drivers who slowed traffic and parked outside nightclubs, restaurants, and cafés.⁷⁸ Plante also prioritized legibility by enforcing the requirement for drivers to have their permit and licence visible to passengers.⁷⁹ This was met with a mixed reaction from drivers, some of whom claimed that identification cards gave the public reason to be suspicious of them, others, claimed Plante, had congratulated him because the cards restored public confidence and encouraged business. “My program was introduced to convince the public of [taxi drivers’] honesty,” he told the *Montreal Star*, “because many women have told me personally that they’re afraid to ride a

⁷⁵ Edmund W. Vaz, “The Metropolitan Tax-Driver: His Work and Self-Conception,” (M.A. thesis (Sociology), McGill University, 1955), 29-32.

⁷⁶ Jean-Philippe Warren, *Histoire du taxi à Montréal. Des taxis jaunes à UberX* (Montreal: Boréal, 2020), 93-5.

⁷⁷ City of Montreal, By-law No. 1800, *By-law concerning taxi-cabs, automobiles for hire and hackney-coaches* (5 April 1946).

⁷⁸ Letter from Plante to chief of police Albert Langlois, 30 December 1947. P043, S4, SS2, D02 – Maladies vénériennes (1942-1952), AVM. Warren, *Histoire du taxi à Montréal*, 114-5.

⁷⁹ Letter from Plante to Aurel Lemay, Police des Liqueurs, 8 January 1948. Fonds Commission d’enquête présidée par le juge François Caron. 1925-1957, P043, S4, SS2, D01 – Pacifique Plante – 1938, 1947-1948, AVM; “Contrôle des taxis,” *La Presse*, 23 October 1947. Lucien Champeau, “Photo et nom des chauffeurs de taxis,” *La Presse*, 31 January 1948. “Pour les chauffeurs de taxi,” *La Presse*, 2 February 1948.

taxi at night.”⁸⁰ Plante knew that nighttime public space constituted a moment of uncertainty for women, and his “program” had the benefit of making the industry both honest and safe. Later, he would claim that the taxi industry had been the most robust “fortress” of the underground economy because it connected various segments of the demimonde.⁸¹

As the paragraph above indicates, Plante’s desire to make night more legible and honest also evoked patriarchal control of city space. Although gendered and moral concerns over public space were not new, Plante’s effort to stamp-out the sex trade from Montreal alluded to a turning point in the city’s sex history. Officers were instructed to charge women under the Criminal Code’s vagrancy provision and the sections relating to nightwalking and prostitution:

Every one is a loose, idle or disorderly person or vagrant who, [...]

(i.) being a common prostitute or night walker, wanders in the fields, public streets or highways, lanes or places of public meeting or gathering of people, and does not give a satisfactory account of herself;

(j.) having no peaceable profession or calling to maintain himself by, for the most part supports himself by gaming or crime, or by the avails of prostitution.⁸²

The enactment of these anti-vagrancy laws, notes sociologist E. Nick Larsen, “embodied strong class and chauvinist biases which excluded male customers from the vagrancy provisions, and protected upper- and middle-class women to a much greater degree than lower-class women under anti-procurement legislation.”⁸³ Although intended to be used against sex workers, vagrancy laws were applied loosely, which made it nearly impossible for unchaperoned women to wander in public space at night. The police reports of monthly charges laid by the Morality Squad during the late-1940s reveal this sexist approach since women account for nearly all cases

⁸⁰ “Permit Check System to Aid Taxi Drivers,” *Montreal Star*, 25 October 1947.

⁸¹ Pax Plante, “Pour déraciner la prostitution,” *Le Devoir*, 8 February 1950.

⁸² *The Criminal Code and Other Selected Statutes of Canada* (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, [1927] 1928), 80-1. During the 1950s the vagrancy law would be reformed. For more see Prashan Ranasinhe, “Reconceptualizing Vagrancy and Reconstructing the Vagrant: A Socio-Legal Analysis of Criminal Law Reform in Canada, 1953-1972,” *Osgoode Hall Law Journal*, vol. 48, no. 1 (2010): 55-94.

⁸³ E. Nick Larsen, “Canadian Prostitution Control Between 1914 and 1970: An Exercise in Chauvinist Reasoning,” *Canadian Journal of Law and Society / Revue canadienne droit et société* vol. 7, no. 2 (Fall/Automne 1992): 139.

involving nighttime loitering and vagrancy.⁸⁴ Moreover, police departments across Canada had been applying these laws irregularly by targeting women who were not of the dominant race, religion, or ethnic group. As legal historian Constance Backhouse shows, the history of policing sex workers and vagrants essentially amounted to policing “‘undesirables and misfits’ who were thought to threaten the social order.”⁸⁵ Reform and repression thus went hand in hand as police officers often used the vagrancy article to control “dangerous” classes and clear streets of women they considered “undesirable.”⁸⁶

In a revealing example, Rita Picard recalled having been victim of such a police stunt in 1948. After finishing her shift at a restaurant, and to blow off steam, she went to a cabaret on Stanley Street with a girlfriend. The duo ordered drinks and sat at the bar waiting for the performance to begin. Suddenly, ten police officers raided the establishment, and, in the whirlwind of things, both were stuffed into a police van, perhaps on the assumption that they were queer. Despite having committed no crime they were charged under the vagrancy article and spent the night in jail. Upon bad advice from an officer she pleaded guilty.⁸⁷ Because some officers protected the underground economy – sex work, gambling, or the traffic of clandestine alcohol – they devoted their time to shaking down establishments where innocent customers indulged in anodyne leisure. This ruse, which made women the target of choice, allowed officers to extort money from those who had been caught in a raid and, at the same time, it inflated police statistics and provided evidence to the general public that surveillance was

⁸⁴ See Morality Squad reports from 1946 to 1948, P043-4-2-D04, AVM.

⁸⁵ Constance Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice: Women and Law in Nineteenth Century Canada* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1991), 230.

⁸⁶ David Bright, “The Other Woman: Lizzie Cyr and the Origins of the ‘Persons Case’,” *Canadian Journal of Law and Society / Revue canadienne droit et société* vol. 12, no. 2 (Fall/Automne 1998): 99-115.

⁸⁷ Picard, *Ma vie dans les bordels*, 30-40, 115-6. Morality Squad Report (1947-1948), P043-4-2-_4-3_1947-48, AVM.

efficient and effective.⁸⁸ Therefore, not only was sexism entrenched in the law, but it also allowed officers to reinforce the longstanding idea that women who go out at night were, simply put, indecent women.⁸⁹ The very wording of the Criminal Code placed the burden of proof on the accused when it came to charges of vagrancy and prostitution, for it was up to her to provide a “good account” of herself. If not, she bore the assumption of guilt.

But in mid-March 1948, only a year and a half after Chief Dufresne had placed him as head of the Morality Squad, Pax Plante was charged with gross insubordination by Montreal’s new chief of police Albert Langlois.⁹⁰ At the root of the complicated incident – characterized by irregular documentation and dubious claims – was the question of authority among police rank. Chief Langlois had pressured Plante to charge an officer of the Morality Squad with soliciting during a brothel raid. However, Plante believed that this charge was unfounded and only served to discredit the integrity of “his” Morality Squad and benefit Chief Langlois who could then claim to be the Police Department’s sole and incorruptible authority. Plante responded by submitting a sizeable 550-page report filled with statistics, photostats, charts, newspaper articles, names, and dates that showed how Montreal “was literally sold out to commercialized vice” from 1932 to 1945. The report clearly illustrated that an extensive cleanup campaign had begun once Plante took control of the Morality Squad.⁹¹ This evidence, however, was not enough to protect him from Chief Langlois’s commanding authority, and because Plante refused

⁸⁸ This was a common practice in North American cities. For example, the testimonies of innocent women who had been victims of police shakedowns and extortion in New York City came to light during the 1931 Hofstadter Committee probe into corruption in the magistrate’s courts and police department. See Polly Adler, *A House is Not a Home* (Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, [1953] 2006), 176.

⁸⁹ Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 8.

⁹⁰ Langlois had been named Montreal’s Chief of Police in March 1947. See Report by Chief Albert Langlois sent to Joseph-Omer Asselin, [morning] 15 March 1948. Fonds Commission d’enquête présidée par le juge François Caron. 1925-1957, P043, S4, SS2, D01 – Pacifique Plante – 1938, 1947-1948, AVM. Another letter was sent that same afternoon that charged him with negligence and unauthorized publicity of ongoing investigations.

⁹¹ Stuart Keate, “The Unhorsed Galahad of Montreal,” *Macleans*, 15 July 1948. *Mémoire présenté par Me Pacifique Plante au Comité Exécutif de la Cité de Montréal en réponse aux accusations portées contre lui par le directeur du service de la police*, 13 April 1948. P043, S4, SS2, D01 – Pacifique Plante – 1938, 1947-1948, AVM.

to follow orders he was suspended. In a statement following his suspension Plante declared, “I have always said that if my work were interfered with I would tell the whole story to the people of Montreal and leave the verdict up to them. I accept this suspension in the hope that it will bring to an end the considerable and intolerable pressure which has made it impossible for me to continue.”⁹² In May 1948 he was dismissed from the department and was forced to surrender his police badge, revolver, and the keys to his beloved black Buick.

The story does not end here, however. Plante’s dismissal lit a fuse that led to explosive revelations of corruption among municipal politicians and police officers. With the help of *Le Devoir* news director Gérard Filion, Plante wrote a series of newspaper articles that was published from 28 November 1949 to 18 February 1950 and detailed how municipal authorities tolerated, fostered, and protected Montreal’s underworld. Gérard Pelletier was the series’ editor, famed cartoonist Robert Lapalme was its illustrator, and Jean Drapeau was hired as legal counsel to the paper to protect against defamatory libel. In these articles Plante elucidated two truths about “commercialized vice”: the underworld could not exist without police protection and, conversely, police protection of the underworld could not exist without corruption and negligence at the highest political level.⁹³ As far as Plante was concerned, he had been dismissed from the Police Department because he had derailed this system. Plante certainly loathed the underworld, but he placed the blame on authorities who were at best passive and at worst complicit in the proliferation of Montreal’s underground economy. In the final article of the series Plante listed the culprits and accused those governing the city since 1940 – members of both the municipal administration and the Police Department – of corruption.⁹⁴ Following the

⁹² Communiqué de Pax Plante après suspension, P100-06-1-D005, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM.

⁹³ Plante, *Montréal sous le règne de la pègre*, 12-3.

⁹⁴ Pax Plante, “La parole est au public,” *Le Devoir*, 18 February 1950. “Voici les vrais coupables,” *Le Devoir*, 18 February 1950. Lapointe, *Nettoyer Montréal*, 214-7.

transformation of these articles into a book, which became an overnight success, the public came to recognize the ways that corruption influenced municipal affairs.⁹⁵ Shortly after the book's publication, Jean Drapeau became a central member of the crusade against vice and racketeering. Later, Drapeau would recall how corruption and immorality undermined the city's economic and social integrity: "[To] put an end to the scandalous collusion between certain elements of the administration or of the police with the underworld, we chased out of Montreal the greater number of the promoters of this systematic debasement; especially, I am convinced, we gave back to the people of the Metropolis both their self respect and that of others."⁹⁶

During a meeting at the Windsor Hotel in March 1950 the Public Morality Committee (PMC) was founded with specific intent to pursue an inquiry into the corrupt state of politics in Montreal. In contrast to the Ligue de vigilance sociale, the PMC was mostly made up of French-Canadian men, notably nationalists from the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste and Ordre de Jacques-Cartier, businessmen, and well-known public figures like wealthy printer and councilman Pierre Des Marais and intellectual François-Albert Angers.⁹⁷ Committee members and partisans held the common goal to "clean" Montreal of commercialized vice and, ultimately, restore the city's honour and reputation. To this end, they pushed for an inquiry of the underworld at a time when it had a stranglehold on Montreal. The committee submitted a hefty 1,000-page dossier containing close to 5,000 indictments and, almost instantaneously, the Quebec Superior Court accepted the PMC's request for an inquiry.

Thus, on 11 September 1950 began a probe into commercialized vice and political corruption in Montreal. Attendees joined en masse to hear testimonies from the seamy side of

⁹⁵ See Plante, *Montréal sous le règne de la pègre*.

⁹⁶ Jean Drapeau, "Discours à CJAD," 22 January 1958, p.13. P100-02-2-D008, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM.

⁹⁷ Charlebois and Lapointe, *Scandale!*, 219.

town and reporters echoed the inquiry's scandalous coups de théâtre in newspapers. A few months after the inquiry had begun, however, cash-strapped appellants could no longer pay court clerks and stenographers. Justice Caron requested that the city pay for those fees, but city attorneys argued that it could not pay them since it would set a precedent. A couple of weeks later, however, prosecutors reconvened after Plante and Drapeau announced that they had been able to collect enough money after organizing fund-raisers in the city's working-class parishes.⁹⁸ In April and May 1951, critics of the inquiry submitted a counter-petition for a probe into Pax Plante's Morality Squad, and, later, a group of police officers obtained a temporary injunction.⁹⁹ Both were dismissed, however. In the end, the three-year long inquiry cost \$500,00 and involved some 373 witnesses, four thousand court dossiers, and one thousand special exhibits. Altogether it set a record in Canadian jurisprudence for length. And although it ended on 2 April 1953, Justice Caron withheld the report until 8 October 1954. According to one reporter, out of the Caron report emerged a picture of "mink-coated \$30,000-a-year bawdy-house madams driving Cadillacs, gambling joints raking in fortunes under the eyes of corrupt police officers, and city councillors pretending they knew nothing about conditions that were common knowledge."¹⁰⁰ The report landed like a bombshell on Montreal's political scene in autumn 1954 and created what ex-Mayor Raynault described as a collective hysteria.¹⁰¹ In total fifty-eight police officers and five (ex-)members of the city's executive committee were charged and fined, including the chair of the executive committee Joseph-Omer Asselin, ex-chief of police Fernand

⁹⁸ "La ville ne veut pas payer les frais sténographiques," *La patrie*, 6 March 1951. Brodeur, *La délinquance de l'ordre*, 141.

⁹⁹ Morton, *At Odds*, 164.

¹⁰⁰ Ken Johnstone, "How Plante and Drapeau Licked the Montreal Underworld," *Maclean's*, 1 December 1954, 12-3. "Document complet sur l'enquête Caron [Édition spéciale]," *Le Devoir*, 9 October 1954. See Lapointe, *Nettoyer Montréal*.

¹⁰¹ Raynault, *Témoin d'une époque*, 190.

Dufresne, and chief of police Albert Langlois.¹⁰² Under their watch brothels, gambling dens, and speakeasies had made huge profits from the underground economy, and this money eventually landed in their pocket through bribes and collusion. Although the report exonerated Mayor Houde, the scope of the inquiry was enough to set ablaze a political movement that would reshape the city.

Whether it had been a calculated plan or not, the publication of the Caron report weeks before the municipal election paved the way for the reformers' electoral success. Members of the Public Morality Committee (PMC) had carried the momentum from the courtroom to the ballot box by recognizing the power that they could yield under a political party. And although the inquiry had cleaned house in the police department, nobody could argue that it had been enough to rid Montreal of vice. As Plante would later explain to a journalist, the path to reformism could only materialize if the PMC presented a candidate for mayor. The Civic Action League (CAL) fulfilled that mission by presenting both an enticing electoral platform and a youthful candidate for mayor, thirty-eight-year-old prosecutor Jean Drapeau.¹⁰³ The CAL's platform promised honesty in public administration, promotion of taxpayers' interests, and transparency in municipal politics. This much was made clear by the party motto – *serving the public, not ourselves* – which promised electors that members of this party would eradicate greed and corruption from municipal politics.¹⁰⁴ Unsurprisingly, on election day, henchmen

¹⁰² J.-O. Asselin was the chair of the executive committee from 1940 to 1954, Fernand Dufresne was the chief of police from 1931 to 1946, and Albert Langlois was the chief of police from 1947 to 1954. Langlois would eventually clear his name at the Quebec Court of Appeal and was able to make a comeback under Mayor Sarto Fournier from 1957 to 1961. Charlebois and Lapointe, *Scandale!*, 243-4.

¹⁰³ According to Patenaude, Pierre Des Marais (the soon-to-be executive committee chair) convinced Drapeau to run for office during an evening at his retreat in Saint-Marc-sur-Richelieu. Patenaude, *Le vrai visage de Jean Drapeau*, 51. Leon Harris, "Former crime-buster 'Pax' Plante back, has book on Quebec's justice situation," *Montreal Gazette*, 10 September 1971.

¹⁰⁴ Moreover, to qualify for membership, candidates had to meet ten requirements, the first of which was an excellent moral and financial reputation: "[...] pour être candidat de la LAC [il faut] 1. *Jouir d'une excellente réputation au point de vue moral et financier.*" Patenaude, *Le vrai visage de Jean Drapeau*, 106-7.

from the underworld challenged the CAL with tactics that varied from payoffs to ballot-rigging and from intimidation to outright violence. The sum-total of that challenge, argued a *Montreal Herald* journalist, had made the 1954 election the roughest in the city's recent history.¹⁰⁵

Nevertheless, the CAL emerged victorious. Drapeau won the election and Pierre Des Marais, a central PMC member, returned to council as the executive committee chair. They immediately set to work on various reforms.



Figure 2: Photo taken precisely when Jean Drapeau (centre) took position at the mayor's seat. It was described by *La Presse* as "resounding with meaning" as the executive committee chair Pierre Des Marais (left) and Pax Plante (right) celebrated alongside him. René Bénard, "L'union qui a conduit à la victoire," *La Presse*, 26 October 1954. P833, S2, D1672, Fonds La Presse, BAnQ.

Drapeau was a populist, but a different kind than Houde. A lifelong resident of the modest Rosemont neighbourhood, Drapeau was profoundly influenced by the nationalist writings of turn of the century intellectuals Henri Bourassa and canon Lionel Groulx. Seeing

¹⁰⁵ Frank Kennedy, "Hoodlum Squads Run Wild in Roughest Election Yet," *Montreal Herald*, 26 October 1954.

himself as the heir to nationalist figures of the past he pursued a law degree at the Université de Montréal during which he rubbed shoulders with the next generation of Quebec's intelligentsia. During his degree he sharpened his academic virtuosity by partaking in immensely popular campus debates. He won the Villeneuve trophy three years in a row – an award handed to the best debating duo – with his debate partner, future Quebec Premier Jean-Jacques Bertrand. After earning his degree in 1941 he began a serious, although unsuccessful, political career. He ran for provincial legislature for the Bloc populaire but lost and, later, he ran for Parliament for the party's federal wing during a by-election and lost again. He continued to practice law as a defense lawyer in murder trials and for striking Asbestos workers during the violent 1949 labour dispute. According to political scientist Andrew Sancton, Drapeau's ascension to power was similar to that of his predecessors, Médéric Martin and Camillien Houde. Like them, he had based his appeal on the simple but effective notion that he personified the city itself and that a vote against him was somehow a vote against Montreal, or at least against the French-speaking part of the city.¹⁰⁶ His influence extended beyond the city, however, as Quebecers claimed him as a national symbol for competence, wit, eloquence, and panache.¹⁰⁷

As for Pax Plante, Justice Caron had deemed his dismissal from the Police unjustified and, in the election's immediate aftermath, he found a new role within the department. The suspension of chief of police Albert Langlois meant that his assistant Tom Leggett would act as chief of police, pending the outcome of Langlois's appeal. Meanwhile, Pax Plante filled Leggett's role as assistant chief of police, a position that allowed him to supervise the Morality Squad. As the first order of business Plante summoned the Police Department's captains and ordered them to visit the city's night haunts – bars and nightclubs – to warn owners that they

¹⁰⁶ Sancton, "Montreal," 77.

¹⁰⁷ In 1957 he hosted a weekly television show *Le maire de Montréal vous parle*, which aired 26 episodes on Sherbrooke's CHLT-TV (what later became TVA). P100-05-1-D009, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM.

would “lose their licences if they didn’t get rid of the prostitutes who did their soliciting on the premises.”¹⁰⁸ Historian John Gilmore notes that the warning was obeyed and, by the end of November 1954, there were hardly any sex workers to be found in Montreal bars and nightclubs.¹⁰⁹ Over the following months the CAL and the Police Department refined and boosted the crackdown on the nighttime economy so that taxi drivers, artists, musicians, nightclub owners, and other individuals contributing to it would obey the law. This, the reformers believed, would dissipate the notion that Montreal was “wide-open.”

“What Virtue has done to Montreal”: Jean Drapeau’s First Term

The inquiry exposed the geography of vice and corruption, and, to recast Montreal as an “honest” city, Drapeau believed that his administration had to clampdown on both the space and time that illicit activities took place. The Police Department effectively built on the work that Plante had started in the late-1940s and began enforcing the hours of operation for nighttime venues. As previously mentioned, although the Quebec Liquor Board banned the sale of alcohol in Montreal between 2:00 A.M. and 8:00 A.M. many establishments violated the law. Moreover, because of the structure of the provincial legal system only a special unit of the Quebec Provincial Police (QPP) could enforce liquor laws. This structure meant that Montreal police officers held no authority over how or when alcoholic beverages were served in establishments with liquor permits (granted that this establishment held one in the first place). Therefore, Mayor Drapeau turned to a more indirect strategy to control these establishments. He did so by enforcing bylaw 926, which required businesses to have a city permit to sell goods. Created in 1927 the bylaw regulated the health and safety of establishments and restaurants – like taverns, cafés, boarding-houses, hotels, etc. – where foods or beverages were held, prepared, cooked,

¹⁰⁸ Weintraub, *City Unique*, 85.

¹⁰⁹ Gilmore, *Swinging in Paradise*, 191.

stored, sold, transported, delivered, or given away.¹¹⁰ For Drapeau, bylaw 926 was a flexible tool; it gave local officers the authority to regulate establishments that sold food and beverages and – this is the crucial factor – also held a provincial liquor permit. Therefore, if an establishment rejected the section of the provincial liquor legislation outlining when liquor could be sold, city officials padlocked its door under bylaw 926 by claiming that it was a nuisance, unsafe, or unhygienic. For all intents and purposes, the city would be closed from 2:00 A.M. – when alcohol could no longer be served – until the early morning hours when most labourers began their workday.

Once these parameters had been set, Plante then focused on eradicating brothels. This pushed sex workers out of safe workspaces and onto streets or into cafés, cabarets, and nightclubs. The immediate effect of this transformation meant that waiters and bussers became intermediators between sex workers and clients. Without the shelter of a brothel or the convenient protection of well-connected madams, sex workers' labour conditions precipitously deteriorated and became dominated by male pimps who connected them to customers by way of taxi drivers or through “tourist rooms.” This reorganization led to a noticeable rise in violence against sex workers and was clearly the most transformative moment for the sex industry in the history of Montreal.¹¹¹ Later, sex worker Rita Picard recalled how reformers had, in the span of a few weeks, radically transformed Montreal from a “wide-open” to a “closed” city by removing the mechanisms that had made the sex industry safe. In fact, in the wake of the 1954 municipal election she, and famed madam Martha Adams, relocated temporarily to Ontario.¹¹² The cleanup

¹¹⁰ City of Montreal, By-law No. 926, *Concerning Food Establishments and Restaurants* (9 May 1927).

¹¹¹ Danielle Lacasse, “La fin d’un univers féminin: l’Enquête Caron et la prostitution, 1945-1965,” in *Les Bâtisseuses de la Cité : actes du Colloque Les Bâtisseuses de la Cité dans le cadre de la Section d’études féministes du Congrès de l’Acfas 1992*, ed. Évelyne Tardy (Montreal: Association canadienne-française pour l’avancement des sciences, 1993), 97-106; .Andrée Lévesque, “Le Bordel: Milieu De Travail Contrôlé,” *Labour / Le Travail* vol. 20 (Fall 1987), 30.

¹¹² See chapter five in Picard, *Ma vie dans les bordels* and chapter six in Martha Adams, *Martha Adams* (Montreal: Éditions du Jour, 1972).

campaign drove sex workers out of the city en masse, and many resettled in mining or industrial cities across Quebec and Ontario or wherever the working environment was safest.¹¹³

The transformation had profound consequences for everyone in the city, not just those who made a profit from illicit activities. Notably, it had a devastating impact on the livelihoods of nightclub and cabaret employees. In an interview with historian John Gilmore, two jazz musicians claimed that the crackdown on nighttime venues caused them to lose gigs and that their incomes had plummeted by about 66 percent.¹¹⁴ Elsewhere, Mademoiselle X, a mysterious contributor for *Le Magazine Maclean*, wrote with poetic nostalgia about working as a performer in cabarets and nightclubs during the early 1950s:

The gradual decline of Montreal cabarets over recent years has caused a chorus of lamentations because of its regrettable impact on commerce and the economy. The metropolis, once Canada's most colourful, bustling city, is now a boring site. Montrealers and tourists alike evoke with nostalgia the gaiety of yore: cafés overflowing with cheerful crowds, exciting variety shows, the bustle of the streets at night.¹¹⁵

Mademoiselle X emphasized how the crackdown on closing hours had decimated the city's nightlife, particularly for service industry workers who could no longer rely on profitable and extended late-night shifts. She also noticed that this had led to a rise in fraudulent activities in nighttime establishments. Employees, she noted, had turned to defrauding and swindling customers to recoup losses. Although she did not make the connection between reformist policies and the rise in fraudulent activities explicit, Mademoiselle X nevertheless suggested that the city's night haunts had increasingly become dangerous environments.¹¹⁶ The crackdown on closing hours and the reorganization of the city's nighttime economy had shifted in such a way – as cabaret performers and jazz musicians alike revealed – that a third of local 382 of the

¹¹³ According to Toronto tabloids pimps began flocking to the city following crackdowns in Montreal. See Elise Chenier, "A Place Like the Continental," in *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017). Herbert Manning, "What Virtue has done to Montreal," *Maclean's*, 1 October 1955.

¹¹⁴ Gilmore, *Swinging in Paradise*, 193.

¹¹⁵ Mademoiselle X, "Ce que je pense de nos cabarets," *Le Magazine Maclean*, November 1961, 14.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

Hotel and Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union had been thrown out of work.¹¹⁷ As another musician told Gilmore concerning the underworld's control of nightlife in Montreal: "You can say what you like, but there was a lot of work for everybody when they were running things."¹¹⁸ Indeed, within the span of a few years Montreal's nighttime economy had precipitously declined.

Predictably the loudest rebuke and challenge concerning reforms came from the business sector. Montreal-based members of the *Province of Quebec Licensed Café and Restaurant Owners Association* united to protest the early closing on Saturday and Sunday nights, which caused heavy losses. This state of affair, claimed their spokesperson, made businesses destined for failure because it kept tourists and touring performers away from the city, and it kept local customers at home. Although it was a "new" way of doing business, many law-abiding establishments followed regulations and adapted to reforms. However, in some establishments the provincial law was actively contested as patrons believed that they were entitled to consume drinks till dawn. In a stunning act of defiance, belligerent clients at the downtown Mansfield Café refused to obey the law. The ensuing battle between waiters and clients had the manager telephone Montreal Hydro to cut off the establishment's electricity for several hours – it was the only way that he could get revellers to understand that drinks would no longer be served past 2:00 A.M.¹¹⁹ "Perhaps," considered reporter William Weintraub of Drapeau's first mandate, this had been "the most sweeping reform."¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ 2,000 of the 6,000 union members lost their jobs according to local 382 organizer Gaston Ramat. Manning, "What Virtue has done to Montreal."

¹¹⁸ Gilmore, *Swinging in Paradise*, 198.

¹¹⁹ Manning, "What Virtue has done to Montreal."

¹²⁰ Weintraub, *City Unique*, 85-86.

By mid-May 1955, Drapeau's home was assailed with a brick, an incident he immediately pinned on the business leaders of the nighttime economy. This act, according to him, was "definitively because of the closing time of the city's nightclubs."¹²¹ The business leaders of the Montreal section of the *Province of Quebec Licensed Café and Restaurant Owners Association* immediately condemned the act and disassociated themselves from the violent incident. The following week when the president of the association Roger Parenteau led a delegation meeting with the mayor it made the front-page of *Le Devoir*. The delegation asked police to stop meddling with business, and it asked the city to allow owners to close at their preferred time. Members of the association argued that the 1941 provincial law regulating the time when alcohol could be sold was obsolete and impractical for business, and would lead to a drop in tourist revenue and an increase in criminal activity. "You're choking us out of business!" one member of the association complained. Cognizant of but indifferent to the effect this had on business, the mayor responded: "we don't want to persecute you: all we want is for you to observe the law."¹²² Similar incidents also made the front-page headline of *Le Devoir*. For instance, on 5 June 1956 the paper announced that Pax Plante had revoked fifty-seven municipal permits from cabarets, nightclubs, and restaurants "for tolerating immorality or having remained open after lawful hours, or for both causes."¹²³ These events show how "honesty" and "integrity" guided the regulation of the nighttime economy in the mid-1950s. Indeed, officials seemed undisturbed by the fact that reforms slashed jobs and profits. Throughout Jean Drapeau's first mandate the goal was clear; restore Montreal's reputation by enforcing regulations to reverse the "wide-open" city image.

¹²¹ "L'incident de la brique," *La Presse*, 14 May 1955.

¹²² The mayor met with the owners of Café Minuit, Beaver, Montmartre, Figaro, Chanteclerc, Palm, Rigolo, Tabou, Can-Can, Rainbow, Casino français, and Café de l'Est. "Drapeau Meets Nitery Owner Delegation, Says No!," *Montreal Gazette*, 19 May 1955. Louis Robillard, "Propriétaires de clubs de nuit chez M. Drapeau," *Le Devoir*, 20 May 1955.

¹²³ "57 cabarets perdent leur permis municipal," *Le Devoir*, 5 June 1956.

But reforms did not start and end with the regulation of illicit businesses. In key instances authorities also waged battles against “immoral” games and literature. In March 1955 city administrators enacted a bylaw prohibiting pinball machines and bagatelle games – perceived forms of gambling. City police raided shops to seize machines and charged owners and players who tried to circumvent the gambling crackdown.¹²⁴ Throughout that year police could also be found in pharmacies, cabarets, newsstands, and restaurants, seizing publications by the yellow press and everything they considered to be pornographic or obscene.¹²⁵ Published weekly, the ephemeral yellow press provided lurid coverage of the latest gossip about vice, corruption, and criminality. For example, *Allo Police* (est. 1953) had been launched to capitalize on public interest in crime and corruption, and *Midnight* (est. 1954) had been started by a teenager as a guide to goings-on within Montreal nightclubs and, more generally, about the semi-illicit pleasures of nightlife.¹²⁶ In this way, the mid-1950s cleanup campaign entailed social reforms that largely extended to visual and symbolic representations of moral corruption.

The very process of shutting down brothels, uncooperative nightclubs, gambling dens, and eradicating *any* form of perceived immorality, had choked Montreal’s once tempestuous nightlife. Montreal’s 1955-1956 budget, adopted at the same meeting when council passed the bylaw prohibiting pinball machines and bagatelle games, emphasized the need to regulate the night. It doubled the business tax for establishments where alcohol was served and allocated 10.6 percent of its budget, the largest to any single service, to the Police Department.¹²⁷ To be

¹²⁴ City of Montreal, By-law No. 2223, *By-law to prohibit pin ball machines or bagatelle games* (30 March 1955). Manning, “What Virtue has done to Montreal.”

¹²⁵ Namaste, *Imprimés interdits*, 106.

¹²⁶ Other notorious periodicals included *Tous les secrets de l’amour*, *Montréal confidentiel*, *Flirt et potins*, *Minuit*, *Jour et nuit*, and *Nouvelles et potins*. Namaste, *Imprimés interdits*, 27-29; Will Straw, “Tabloid Expo,” in *Expo 67: Not Just a Souvenir*, ed. Rhona Richman Kenneally and Johanne Sloan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 230.

¹²⁷ The Police Department received \$10.7 million from the city’s \$112.9 million budget. Jacques Delisle, “Budget municipal adopté à l’unanimité au conseil,” *La Presse*, 1 April 1955.

sure, the sum of this process had little effect on the hardcore crime ring, which was still very much in business (although less visible than before). What it did do, however, was completely asphyxiate the nighttime economy, which slashed the wages on which thousands of labourers depended. Waiters and parking lot attendants alike claimed that tourists from Toronto or New York no longer wanted to spend time in Montreal. The vice-president of the Taxi Owners of Montreal Raoul Houle gave further evidence to this when he told a reporter that the earnings of nighttime taxi drivers had been halved in 1955: “Tourists used to stay around a week or two for some fun and then move on. This summer they got fed up with the early closing [hours] after a couple of days and left.”¹²⁸

[Territorial Modernity and Defeat]

Although it created an important cultural upheaval, the crackdown on vice and immorality was only one part of the reformist agenda during Mayor Drapeau’s first mandate. The modernization of the city’s crumbling infrastructure was another defining aspect of that mandate, and it was facilitated by postwar prosperity, scrutiny over tax rolls, and generous loans. Working in piecemeal fashion, the city bull-dozed, demolished, and restored elements that had been marring Montreal’s image.¹²⁹ Administrators eyed aging infrastructure and run-down tenements with keen interest and began working on throughfare and street resurfacing, traffic congestion, and public parks, things that had been neglected for years. Particularly important for public works – which received \$10.5 million from the 1955-1956 budget, the second largest amount behind the Police Department – was the widening of Dorchester Boulevard. The project transformed Dorchester from a “decrepit, run-down, narrow” street into

¹²⁸ Manning, “What Virtue has done to Montreal.”

¹²⁹ “In New York DesMarais [*sic*] borrowed thirty-five million dollars – just for a start; next year he intends to borrow forty millions and the year after that, sixty millions – all for city improvements, slum clearance and other projects.” Manning, “What Virtue has done to Montreal.”

an alleyway for skyscrapers, which reoriented the city's central business district away from the port.¹³⁰ Around the same time, city councillor Paul Dozois submitted a report that identified thirteen areas for urban renewal. Although it reached the city's executive committee weeks before Jean Drapeau was elected, the 1954 Dozois Plan focused on run-down tenements too, including the Red Light district. It proposed to demolish and replace that district's crumbling infrastructure, inadequate plumbing, and overall unhygienic traits for state-of-the-art affordable housing. Typical of slum clearance projects, the Dozois Plan promised to increase public revenues through property and business tax.¹³¹

Once in power, however, Mayor Drapeau saw the Red Light district as a blank canvas upon which he could engineer a project that would build splendour and prestige and give the city an international reputation. He proposed that the district be transformed into what he endearingly called *Cité des ondes*, a neighbourhood dedicated to both telecommunications and high culture.¹³² Although *Cité des ondes* was but a pipedream, his hope of turning Montreal into a hub for high culture began to materialize in April 1956. Five years after the Massey Report had advocated for federal funding for arts and culture, Montreal's city council voted in favour of bylaw 2325 creating the Greater Montreal Council of Arts (GMCA). Through the GMCA the mayor was able to mastermind the city's, and by extension a large portion of the province's, cultural effervescence.¹³³ The GMCA was attached to the mayor's office and its duties included

¹³⁰ Hydro Quebec, Canadian Industries Ltd., the Royal Bank of Canada, and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce all erected their head office on this street. Leslie Roberts, "The Autocratic Regime of Jean Drapeau," *Maclean's*, 18 April 1964.

¹³¹ Susan M. Ruddick, "The Movement for Public Housing in Montreal, 1930-1958," (M.A. thesis (geography), McGill University, 1979), 105-6. Eugene Boyko (dir.), *Les Habitations Jeanne-Mance* (Montreal: National Film Board, 1964). Martin Drouin, "De la démolition des taudis à la sauvegarde du patrimoine bâti (Montréal, 1954-1973)," *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, vol. 41 no. 1 (Fall 2012): 22-36.

¹³² Displaced families would be relocated in another part of town as part of a project called *Cité-Famille. Cité des Ondes : Un projet de suppression des taudis et de rénovation du cœur de Montréal* (September 1957). VM001-00-D061, AVM.

¹³³ City of Montreal, By-law No. 2325, *By-law to create the Greater Montréal Council of Arts* (18 April 1956).

maintaining and promoting the artistic and cultural life of the city's metropolitan area as well as administering grants and subsidies.¹³⁴ During its first three years it allocated money to twelve plays, two operas, two ballets, four works for orchestra, and for the Canadian League of Composers to present two concerts of original Canadian compositions. These clearly exhibited a penchant for high culture and, according to the GMCA's first president Léon Lortie, made Montreal a modern city that was attractive to tourists.¹³⁵ Thus, while administrators clamped down on perceived forms of "low" culture – indecent publications, venues, and performances – they defined acceptable cultural productions by establishing a permanent council to fund it. In Drapeau's mind the GMCA was exactly what Montreal needed in order to be considered a leading city of international status.

As the mayor elevated the city's status by promoting megaprojects and high culture, he ignored mounting protests, which eventually contributed to his electoral defeat in 1957. Not only had he been selling his dream for a telecommunication and high culture district to other administrators but, from the very beginning, he delayed, prevented, and meddled with the Dozois Plan. He overlooked the fact that it had the overwhelming approval of city council and the public. By early fall 1956 Premier Duplessis made a fateful visit to City Hall to discuss provincial-municipal business.¹³⁶ By then, Paul Dozois had left municipal politics for a seat in the Quebec Legislative Assembly and was the minister of municipal affairs in the Duplessis government. Still, after meeting with Premier Duplessis, Drapeau refused to sign the housing plan into action and publicly stated that "the Dozois project will not be built so long as I am

¹³⁴ The GMCA was supported and funded by donations, contributions by municipal corporations, and 1 percent of sales tax paid to the city by the provincial government. An Act to amend the charter of the city of Montréal (assented to, the 23rd of February, 1956), dossier – Création, P100-04-1-D001, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM.

¹³⁵ Léon Lortie, *The Greater Montréal Council of arts after three years of existence: The President's Report*, January 1960, dossier – 1959-1960, P100-04-1-D001, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM.

¹³⁶ Robert Duffy, "Is Drapeau a match for Duplessis?," *Maclean's*, 22 June 1957.

mayor.”¹³⁷ It was clear from this meeting that the battle lines had been drawn. Therefore, when the 1957 municipal election arrived, widespread discontent with Mayor Drapeau was evident. The mayor was roundly jeered at the Forum during the Stanley Cup final that spring. That same season, one of Drapeau’s closest allies, Pax Plante, had to relinquish his role as interim chief of police after the Quebec Court of Appeal overturned Justice Caron’s decision and reinstated chief of police Albert Langlois. Despite his permanent return Langlois remained embittered and openly defied Jean Drapeau’s orders for the police.¹³⁸ Moreover, labour unions were deeply upset when the CAL privatized waste management (a process that slashed 230 permanent jobs) and were outraged to hear that the executive committee chair Pierre Des Marais had advised the City of Saint-Michel’s police to use tear gas against strikers.¹³⁹ Finally, the press itself began to turn on Drapeau for several reasons, one of which was his mishandling of a critical public health issue; after Drapeau campaigned to have children immunized with the new polio vaccine he told journalists that his own three sons would not be inoculated.¹⁴⁰

For all of these different reasons mayoral candidate Senator Sarto Fournier pulled ahead and won the 1957 municipal election. Fournier, a seasoned politician who had served as Liberal MP from 1935 to 1953, ran a savvy municipal campaign that was supported by Premier Duplessis.¹⁴¹ Electors expressed their dissatisfaction with Drapeau’s political style and his vision for Montreal – at least, for the moment – by voting him out of office. Fournier’s victory, however, was far from convincing. His party, the Greater Montreal Rally, held a minority of seats on council, which produced a period of political stalemate at City Hall for the next three years, during which Des Marais made himself the leader of an organized opposition. In the end,

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ “Violente sortie du chef Langlois: ‘L’enquête Caron fut une fumisterie et ses instigateurs m’attaquent encore,’” *Le Devoir*, 31 July 1957. “Danger de guerre entre le maire Drapeau et le chef A. Langlois,” *Le Devoir* 4 May 1957.

¹³⁹ “Campagne syndicale contre la Ligue d’action civique,” *La Presse*, 18 October 1957.

¹⁴⁰ Weintraub, *City Unique*, 270; Robert Duffy, “Is Drapeau a match for Duplessis?,” *Maclean’s*, 22 June 1957.

¹⁴¹ See chapter XVII in McKenna and Purcell, *Drapeau*.

Drapeau never conceded the election, and he never made the traditional concession speech at City Hall because he believed that there had been electoral fraud. A few months after the election Drapeau gave a vindictive speech before CAL supporters at the St. Denis Theatre. That evening he claimed that electoral fraud had been enabled by a corrupt, hateful, and wealthy opposition made up of anglophone journalists and the yellow press.¹⁴² During another speech, when he tried to clarify his thoughts, he warned that “racial politics” were likely to emerge in Quebec if the Anglophone press and English-speaking citizens were to “remain aloof from the great reform movements.”¹⁴³ In February 1958, the new executive committee fired his great ally, Pax Plante, because of irregularities in paperwork. Plante contested but was unsuccessful, and because of multiple death threats he left Montreal for good, opting to settle in Mexico.¹⁴⁴ By spring 1958, after bouts of dismay and distress, Drapeau temporarily withdrew from the public spotlight.

A Quarter Century of Uninterrupted Power

Jean Drapeau’s public hiatus was short-lived. Before the 1960 municipal election, when he was re-elected mayor with 53 percent of the votes, he published a book that was meant to convey his French-Canadian nationalist views to voters on two pressing issues: constitutional reform and economic life. Incidentally, this book, *Jean Drapeau vous parle*, barely mentions municipal affairs. Instead, it reviews contemporary failures by provincial and federal leaders, which leaves the reader with the impression that he was announcing a renewed foray into

¹⁴² The speech was widely disseminated, and it was also translated for the city’s Anglophone newspapers. “To Quit or Hold On?” *Montreal Star*, 23 January 1958. Conférence de Me Jean Drapeau, *Lâcher ou tenir? (sous les auspices de la Ligue d’action civique)*, P100-02-2-D008, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM.

¹⁴³ Jean Drapeau, *Qui va payer?*, 24 February 1958, 14. P100-02-2-D008, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM. Bill Bantey, “Drapeau Says English Face Racial Politics,” *Montreal Gazette*, 25 February 1958.

¹⁴⁴ He kept an intellectual connection with Quebec. In the 1970s he participated in the Commission d’enquête sur le crime organisé (CECO) and gave a book-length interview to Alain Stanké and Jean-Louis Morgan. He died on 9 August 1976 in Guadalajara. Stanké, Morgan, and Plante, *Pax, lutte à finir avec la pègre*. de Champlain, *Histoire du crime organisé*, 199.

provincial or federal politics. With this in mind, Drapeau also embarked on an educational campaign from 1957 to 1959 to alert Quebecers of the dangers that threatened them.¹⁴⁵ Although his electoral defeat of 1957 was still fresh, his political ambitions had not been curbed. This much was clear in his plan to transform the CAL from a municipal party to a provincial party – one that could challenge Maurice Duplessis and the Union nationale.¹⁴⁶ Gradually, he also became engrossed in the tenets of corporatism and met with Raymond Barbeau, founder of the right-wing nationalist party Alliance laurentienne, to discuss the ideas of French author and political organizer Charles Maurras.¹⁴⁷ Drapeau’s decision in 1959 to lay the foundation for the CAL’s transformation toward Quebec politics was both insightful and opportunistic. He spent several weeks campaigning on behalf of the CAL for an independent candidate during a provincial by-election in Lac Saint-Jean, but failed to convince voters.¹⁴⁸ He quickly abandoned the provincial political sphere and refocused his attention to Montreal.

The transfer of power from Drapeau to Fournier scarcely changed things for nightclub owners. Throughout 1958, and under pressure from residents and newspapers, the executive committee called on chief of police Albert Langlois to crackdown on nightclubs that sold clandestine alcohol and advertised indecent shows. Eventually, Chief Langlois convened one hundred club owners to a municipal courtroom and publicly stated that raids would occur as long as they continued their illicit activities, particularly “shows involving erotic dancers.” Following this meeting Langlois rested on his laurels and repeatedly claimed that Montreal was completely free of commercialized vice. The ridiculous statement baffled elected officials,

¹⁴⁵ Jean Drapeau, *Jean Drapeau vous parle* (Montreal: Les Éditions de la Cité, 1959), 20.

¹⁴⁶ Bill Bantey, “Ex-Mayor Wants ‘Cells’ Across Quebec,” *Montreal Gazette*, 23 January 1958. “Une campagne d’épuration à l’échelle provincial,” *Le Devoir*, 20 March 1958.

¹⁴⁷ Barbeau insisted that the best choice for Quebec independence was Jean Drapeau. Raymond Barbeau, “Je m’explique,” *Liberté*, vol. 4, no. 21 (March 1962), 153-4. Patenaude, *Le vrai visage de Jean Drapeau*, 64.

¹⁴⁸ “Me Jean Drapeau parle de ‘Cette histoire de minuit et une minute’,” *Le progrès du Saguenay*, 14 September 1959. “Au Lac-St-Jean M. Paul Levasseur l’emporte,” *Le progrès du Saguenay*, 17 September 1959.

including councillor Pierre Des Marais who wondered how the Police Department could be so misinformed about the “the abnormal things that are happening.”¹⁴⁹

Weeks before the 1960 election and in a sudden twist, Jean Drapeau – along with a group of acolytes – mutinied against the CAL and formed the Civic Party. The Civic Party’s 1960 sixteen-page electoral platform rehashed the promise to eradicate vice and corruption from the city while also promising to fight unemployment with a vast series of public works projects costing \$700 million – the biggest of which was a subway.¹⁵⁰ Many of these promises had been part of the CAL’s platform too. However, they appealed more to voters when proposed by Drapeau or Civic Party members. Part of the Civic Party’s popularity resided in the fact that many Quebec Liberal Party members – recently elected to the Legislative Assembly – publicly endorsed it. Furthermore, Drapeau not only abandoned the CAL but also left it in financial disarray by racking up the party’s bills right before his exit. CAL founding member J.-Z.-Léon Patenaude would describe that move as nothing short of Machiavellian.¹⁵¹ All of this allowed Drapeau to be elected mayor and for the Civic Party to win two-thirds of the seats on city council. The Civic Party’s fortunes were greatly improved by the only slightly less new regime in Quebec City, which supported the projects that Drapeau championed.¹⁵²

Because the Caron Inquiry had undermined public confidence in police, Mayor Drapeau immediately took steps to re-establish public trust. Once he was re-elected he awarded a year-long contract to Andrew Way, a commander in the London Metropolitan Police, and to André

¹⁴⁹ de Champlain, *Histoire du crime organisé*, 200-1.

¹⁵⁰ During the mid-twentieth-century Montreal’s public transit was equipped with buses and trams. Transit mobility increased with the opening of the Métro in 1966. McKenna and Purcell, *Drapeau*, 132.

¹⁵¹ Especially embittered by the use of CAL funds for primetime slots at CHLT-TV, Patenaude wrote a book to warn the electorate about Drapeau’s devious and treacherous traits, comparing him to the likes of Franco, Salazar, and Perón. Patenaude, *Le vrai visage de Jean Drapeau*, 31, 117-8.

¹⁵² See images of René Lévesque and Jean Drapeau. Raymond Masse, “Me Drapeau a prêté son serment,” *La Presse*, 1 November 1960. Myer Negru, “City, Province Move Closer,” *Montreal Gazette*, 1 November 1960.

Gaubiac, ex-chief of police for the Paris Police Department, so that they could advise the city on the best practices to end corruption. Acting as co-consultants, the seasoned policemen recommended sweeping changes that would be implemented gradually from 1961 to 1966, beginning with bylaw 2655 “concerning the Police Department.”¹⁵³ Afterwards, when chief of police Albert Langlois retired, the mayor took another step to further safeguard the department from corruption by hiring Joseph-Adrien Robert as chief of police. Robert’s incorruptibility was proven, first as chief of police for Hull (1937-1960) and later as an instrumental member in that city’s corruption probe.¹⁵⁴

As Chief Robert eased into his role, he ordered officers to patrol notorious establishments. While some journalists congratulated Chief Robert on his approach, others implored him to be more ruthless.¹⁵⁵ Administrators did not brush aside that recommendation because, shortly thereafter, the Quebec Liquor Board (QLB) announced that it was teaming up with Chief Robert’s Police Department to cleanup nightspots across the city. The QLB chair told members of the press that the Board had been receiving complaints from the public concerning watered-down drinks hustled by women working in nightspots.¹⁵⁶ Essentially, the chair echoed what Mademoiselle X had revealed in her article for *Le Magazine Maclean*, stating that fraudulent practices had been on the rise. Therefore, provincial and municipal police decided to clampdown on nightclubs and cabarets where clients and female performers mingled. What amounted to the authorities’ further control over the nighttime economy (and would intensify in the leadup to Expo 67 with a heightened regulation of female performers’

¹⁵³ Bylaw 2655 replaced bylaw 247 (1899) and bylaw 978 (1928). City of Montreal, Bylaw No. 2655, *By-law concerning the Police Department* (29 June 1961). Al Palmer, “Police Changeover To Begin Monday,” *Montreal Gazette*, 30 June 1961. Turmel, *Le Service de police de la cité de Montréal (1909-1971)*, 216, 236-46.

¹⁵⁴ For more on Hull and the Surveyer Inquiry see André Cellard, “Le petit Chicago : La “criminalité” à Hull depuis le début du XXe siècle,” *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française*, vol. 45, no. 4 (1992): 519-43.

¹⁵⁵ Roger Champoux, “Un nettoyage et de grand style,” *La Presse*, 16 November 1961.

¹⁵⁶ Al Palmer, “Dancing-Girls, ‘Cons’ – Out In Latest Cabaret Cleanup,” *Montreal Gazette*, 22 November 1961.

behaviours and bodies) allowed them to claim that the war on vice, immorality, and corruption was ongoing, and could only be won with forceful assertion over the nighttime economy.

The landscape of sexual encounter, and of the nighttime entertainment industry more generally, shifted once the city bulldozed the Red Light district's tenement rows. Despite this transformation sex workers, queer community members, and racialized Montrealers remained in the district and continued to frequent its legal nightspots.¹⁵⁷ Meanwhile, erotic performers traditionally found in the Red Light district relocated to the city's downtown. The industry's shift was a process that had been underway since the mid-century as drag performers started competing for valuable space in queer-friendly downtown nightclubs. The Downbeat Club, for example, remodelled its interior to create what is largely viewed as the city's first drag bar and the first establishment catering exclusively to a gay crowd. A doorway in the back alley allowed patrons to enter discreetly, where they could see legendary Armand Monroe host and perform.¹⁵⁸ Meanwhile, at Chez Patee, equally popular drag performer Jean Guilda took the stage (fig. 3).¹⁵⁹ Both Monroe and Guilda had followed in the footsteps of Lana St-Cyr, a drag performer who emulated famous American burlesque performer and stripper Lili St-Cyr.¹⁶⁰ In the following years, however, clashes between the American Guild of Variety Artists and its Canadian counterpart, plus police crackdown on establishments that featured drag, go-go, and erotic shows, dissolved the community's effervescence and led to multiple arrests and closures.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Podmore, "Queering Discourses of Urban Decline," 65-6.

¹⁵⁸ Ross Higgins, "French, English, and the Idea of Gay Language in Montreal," in *Speaking in Queer Tongues: Globalization and Gay Language*, ed. William Leap and Tom Boellstorff (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 86.

¹⁵⁹ "Guilda, reine des cabarets," *Carrefour*, 26 January 1962, accessed 4 March 2022, <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1041989/guilda-deces-artiste-travestissement-spectacle-archives>.

¹⁶⁰ Richard Bradley, "Sorties gaies à Montréal : à la fin des années 1950 et au début des années 1960," *L'Archigai : bulletin des Archives gaies du Québec*, no. 21 (November 2011): 1-2. Charlebois and Lapointe, *Scandale!*, 28-9, 79.

¹⁶¹ Podmore, "Queering Discourses of Urban Decline," 67-70; de Champlain, *Histoire du crime organisé*, 213-4.

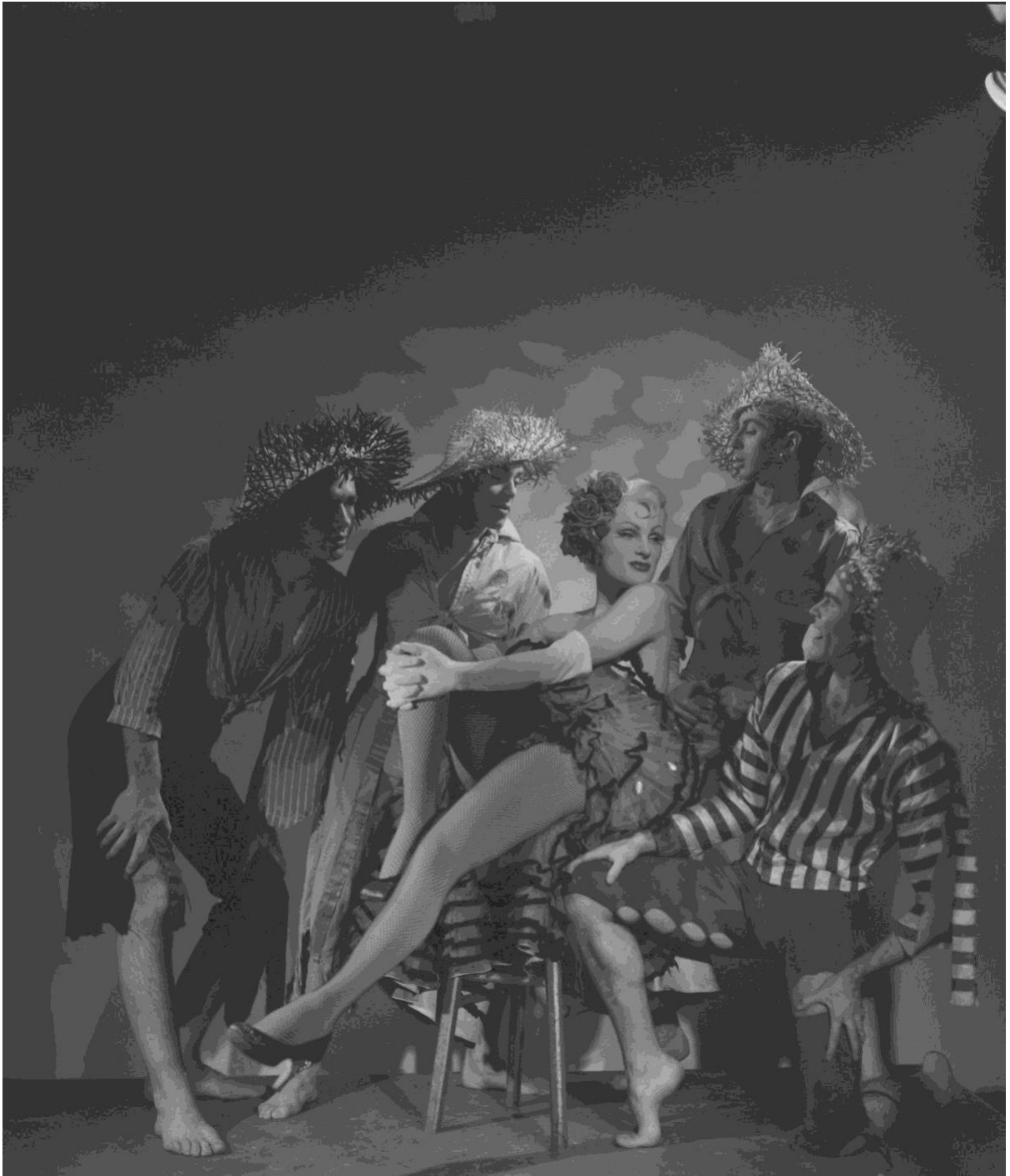


Figure 3: *Gabriel Desmarais, “Jean Guilda, artiste de music-hall,” March 1956, P795, S1, D4284, BAnQ.*

As the opening paragraphs of this chapter reveal, by 1963 both critics and businesspeople felt that the city had become dull. Montreal had lost its ebullient and boisterous “wide-open” characteristics. When Lili St-Cyr returned to Montreal in 1965, after having left in 1951, she observed all of these transformations and noted, that it was “becoming very conscious

of its image.”¹⁶² As Chapter 2 will show, she was right. As Expo 67 approached authorities regulated nighttime in order to show the world that Montreal was a reputable and honest city. And a refined urban image, administrators believed, could make Montreal an attractive destination for upmarket, cosmopolitan, world travellers.

Conclusion

The scope of the Caron Inquiry had far-reaching effects, beginning with the momentum it offered to urban reformers. In the wake of the inquiry, reformers laid the groundwork and articulated a discourse that would profoundly transform the city. Indeed, the Caron Inquiry gave concrete evidence to back up what everyone already knew, that police and political authorities protected the criminal underworld. The Inquiry’s report, coupled with the absence of long-time Mayor Houde from the election ballot, gave PMC members and CAL candidates the space they needed to promote reformism. When Montrealers elected Jean Drapeau to his first term they triggered what one reporter claimed was the “most ruthless house cleaning any Canadian city ever saw.”¹⁶³ This effectively ended the halcyon days of Montreal’s nightlife. Major public investment projects refashioned the landscape while overzealous police officers, under Pax Plante, were given the tools to ‘normalize’ nighttime behaviours.

Within the span of a few years, administrators had clamped down on perceived decadent social and moral behaviours. Then, the city promoted itself as a safer destination for moneyed tourists and business entrepreneurs by investing in high culture and infrastructure. Although incredulous and incensed with the result of the 1957 municipal election, Drapeau’s second victory in 1960 paved the way for further transformations – *un grand nettoyage* – that would

¹⁶² St-Cyr, *Ma vie de stripteaseuse*, 271.

¹⁶³ Manning, “What Virtue has done to Montreal.”

cement his legacy as a powerful mid-twentieth-century reformer. With power centralized in the council chamber of Montreal's City Hall after electoral reform, and with the executive committee comprised of like-minded men, Drapeau pushed for greater projects – ones that promised to have the world talking about Montreal and seeing it as a modern metropolis. By the early-1960s, when citizens, pundits, artists, and authorities themselves realized how this realignment of forces had killed the spirit of the city's nightlife, Montreal's nighttime vitality could not be restored. By then, massive urban renewal projects replaced tenement rows where bawdy- and gambling-houses once stood.

Chapter 2: The Political Economy, 1963-1971

In 1962 Montreal was awarded the 1967 Universal and International Exhibition after the chosen host, Moscow, stated that it did not wish to have the spotlight on itself. In lieu of attending an event meant to mark the Russian Revolution's fiftieth anniversary, Expo 67 visitors would travel to Montreal to celebrate the Canadian Confederation's centennial anniversary. It was a bizarre twist for the Bureau International des Expositions, but the outcome allowed Montreal to formulate a plan to host the world. With the support of provincial and federal governments, the newly created site of Expo 67 took shape on an archipelago of artificial islands on the Saint Lawrence River.¹ Preparation for the megaevent, however, moved beyond the event site as the city fast-tracked urban renewal projects in neighbourhoods where tourists and reporters might set foot during the event. In December 1962 the municipal administration voted to expropriate residents from Victoriatown, a neighbourhood that stood on Montreal's shore across from the soon-to-be Expo site. Victoriatown's residents, a majority of whom were of Italian and Irish descent, faced the city's largest urban renewal project since the completion of the housing development in the Red Light district.² A few years later, the city began purchasing properties in Little Burgundy, home to a vibrant Black community, to clear that neighbourhood of low-income tenements and further extend the city's road network.³ Throughout this process the city masked Little Burgundy's poverty from onlookers by erecting seven-foot-high, blue-and-white fences along its perimeter.⁴ At stake in both these cases was Montreal's new

¹ See Craig Moyes and Steven Palmer, *Expo 67 and Its World: Staging the Nation in the Crucible of Globalization* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022).

² "Hanley Says Fair Would Help End 'Point' Slum," *Montreal Star*, 13 December 1962. Fred Poland, "Plan to Redevelop Brings Out the Irish In 'Point' Residents," *Montreal Star*, 26 December 1962.

³ The city bought over 75 percent of the neighbourhood's land and dwellings over a period of eight years. Dorothy W. Williams, *Blacks in Montreal 1628-1986: An Urban Demography* (Cowansville: Les Éditions Yvon Blais, 1989), 72. See also Chapter 3 in Will Langford, *The Global Politics of Poverty in Canada: Development Programs and Democracy, 1964-1979* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), 88-122.

⁴ McKenna and Purcell, *Drapeau*, 150-1.

international reputation as a modern metropolis. Indeed, because Expo's site was so close to the city's downtown, officials embarked on a crusade to make the city's image as immaculate as the event's site itself, hoping that this would enhance the overall experience for visitors and tourists. Like fairs held before and after, Expo 67 was designed by planners as an ideal representation of modern life, and the city used this opportunity to reorganize urban life accordingly.



Figure 4: *Expo 67's bright displays appear in the foreground while Jacques-Cartier Bridge, and the road leading to Montreal, loom in the background. André Sima, "View of Ile Notre-Dame," 1 July 1967, NFB67-10476, Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography Fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives.*

While visitors experienced Expo 67's bright displays during the day they travelled to the city centre in the evening to enjoy all that Montreal's nightlife had to offer. According to reports, however, many establishments – where tourists, performing artists, bartenders, and

locals had been mingling for most of the twentieth century – had been undermined by fraudsters who used “every known method – plus a few they invented themselves – to part customers from their money.”⁵ At the centre of this struggle were two dishonest practices. The first one had owners or managers submerge establishments into near-darkness, which allowed employees to confuse clients either by setting prices at exorbitant rates or by shortchanging and pickpocketing them. The second, and the most rampant one, would have B-drink hustlers – usually women who were employed by the establishment as a waitress, hostess, or performing artist – charm men into buying them expensive drinks. While his drink always contained alcohol, hers was a “phoney” – a watered-down drink for which he was charged full price.⁶ The gist of this scheme laid in the conspiring relationship between her and the bartender; B-drink hustlers, bartenders, managers, and owners all made considerable profits from this scheme.

As I discuss throughout this chapter, indignant male patrons exposed these frauds by telling their stories to the media. They claimed that theft and price gouging was rampant and warned others about paying for phoney drinks. And what upset customers most was the fact that they were vulnerable victims unwilling or unable to dispute capricious and costly outcomes, especially once they realized that their drinking companion was not a genuine connection but had been planted to extract as much money as possible. Men had expected adoration from women in bars, but were finding themselves the targets of scams. Therefore, in the leadup to Expo, police stepped up raids on establishments serving alcohol and started waging war on what Will Straw calls Montreal’s “zone of contamination” – the circuit of shady nightclubs, bars, and hotels that fed the local and tourist economies in the 1960s.⁷ Ultimately, and as a representative

⁵ Roger Newman, “Quebec Viewpoint: Clip joints mar Montreal’s image,” *Globe and Mail*, 30 December 1966. For a local response to that article see “Mauvaise publicité à Toronto: Certains clubs nuisent à la bonne réputation de Montreal,” *Dimanche-Matin*, 15 January 1967.

⁶ Amanda H. Littauer, “The B-Girl Evil: Bureaucracy, Sexuality, and the Menace of Barroom Vice in Postwar California,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 12, no. 2 (April 2004): 174.

⁷ Straw, “Tabloid Expo,” 228.

for the Montreal police told reporters, in the months leading up to Expo “[c]heap night clubs catering to cheap people doing cheap things” would be seeing a whole lot them.⁸

This chapter shows how the city reorganized the nighttime economy in preparation for Expo 67 by directly confronting and dismantling the fraudulent schemes described above. To achieve this, the municipal administration reconfigured the control of liquor distribution and licensing several weeks before the start of the event by enacting a highly controversial “anti-mingling” bylaw, which made it illegal for employees of establishments serving alcohol to drink, dance, or sit with customers. Crucially, however, the bylaw was more than a tool to protect nightspot customers. Because elected officials knew that sex workers constantly drifted in and out of the service industry depending on their economic circumstances, and would generate additional income by finding part-time jobs like waitressing, dancing, or hosting, they outright stated that it would be used to uproot the sex industry from such establishments. “The real purpose behind [this bylaw],” stated the chair of the executive committee Lucien Saulnier, “is to fight prostitution.”⁹ To eradicate sex workers from the service industry, officers patrolled nightspots and eyed women who “mingled” with male clients. But as many court cases involving this bylaw reveal, this patriarchal control of nightspots led to the arrest of women not because of any concrete evidence related to sex work, but for mundane acts like taking a seat, dancing, or chatting with customers. And because the bylaw was used so assertively it became

⁸ Tim Burke, “Police Launch Night Club War,” *Montreal Star*, 26 July 1966.

⁹ Florian Bernard, “Montréal adopte des règlements sévère contre la prostitution dans les cabarets,” *La Presse*, 10 March 1967. “Step Against Prostitution: New Bylaw Cracks Down On Bar Girl Mingling,” *Montreal Star*, 10 March 1967. See also Patrick A. Dunae, “Sex, Charades, and Census Records: Locating Female Sex Trade Workers in a Victorian City,” *Histoire sociale / Social History* vol. 42, no. 84 (Novembre-November 2009): 271. Lévesque, *Making and Breaking the Rules*, 118.

the source of intense contestation as legal scholars, lawyers, business owners and employees, and judges debated whether Montreal exercised power beyond its legal authority.¹⁰



Figure 5: *Man and His World (top) stands across the river from Montreal's downtown (bottom).* [artist unknown], "Ville de Montréal la nuit," June 1967, VM094-AD053-001, AVM.

The push to regulate (sexual) behaviour in nightspots was a conspicuous evolution of mid-1950s reformism and, accordingly, further disrupted the service industry economy. This was especially the case for women who were continually (mis)identified as duplicitous B-drink hustlers – a term that became indistinguishable from sex work in the press and in the minds of authorities and residents. Nevertheless, the anti-mingling bylaw allowed city authorities to claim that they had responded to the threat of fraudulent behaviours most prevalent in dark and dingy nightspots. By further regulating establishments serving alcohol, officials claimed to have made the nighttime economy more honest, which enhanced Montreal's reputation as a suitable and safe tourist destination.

¹⁰ See René Pépin, "Le pouvoir des provinces canadiennes de légiférer sur la moralité public," *Revue générale de droit* vol. 19, no. 4 (1988): 884-5. Nathalie Durand, "Analyse de la production et de l'application d'une norme pénale : l'infraction de fraternisation," (M.A. thesis (Criminology), Université de Montréal, 1998).

Beyond affecting thousands of workers employed in establishments serving alcohol, the bylaw was partially responsible – and this was not intended – for the modernization of the provincial liquor legislation, which had been in effect since the establishment of the Quebec Liquor Board (QLB) in 1921. The Quebec government launched an inquiry into the sale of liquor and liquor laws in November 1968 in an attempt to find a balance between “order and revenue.” There were several reasons behind the inquiry, but chief among them in the context of this chapter was the fact that Montreal’s municipal administration had enacted a bylaw that concerned alcohol control, a power of provincial authority. Therefore, while commissioners investigated how to reform the liquor market they considered the complicated legal structure that had led Montreal authorities to enact its anti-mingling bylaw.¹¹ In fact, when Justice Lucien Thinel submitted the inquiry’s report in 1971 he recommended that liquor legislation should be “strong enough so that no municipal laws take precedence over that of the provincial board.”¹² By scrutinizing the obscure road to the anti-mingling bylaw’s creation – and its subsequent termination – this chapter underlines how the regulation of sex, promiscuity, and darkness shaped municipal and provincial policies in the leadup to, during, and after Expo 67.

Anti-Mingling Bylaw 3416: The Trouble with Darkness and Intimacy, 1966-1971

In December 1966 *Maclean’s* published a colourful sixteen-page report on Montreal proclaiming that the city had, fairly suddenly, “become one of the world’s great cities.” It attributed this overnight success to a host of factors like migration patterns, politics, and urban development. Ultimately, however, it concluded that Montreal was a great city because of its culture, which it evaluated by remarking that Montreal had more than five thousand bars and

¹¹ Lucien Thinel, *Rapport de la commission d’enquête sur le commerce des boissons alcooliques* (Quebec: Éditeur officiel du Québec, 1971), 120, 126-7.

¹² “Surveillance accrue par une Régie des débits de boisson,” *La Presse*, 19 May 1971.

restaurants whose economy was sustained by stylish middle-class office workers. Women and men who worked downtown enjoyed the cafés and international cuisines available to them during office hours, as well as after work during rambunctious *cinq à sept*s. But because many of these workers were commuters, noted *Maclean's*, this cultural atmosphere was far from a twenty-four-hour affair. In fact, the city's atmosphere underwent drastic change once workers returned home; after working hours, Montreal transformed into a sombre place claimed the magazine. As part of the report one contributor wrote with fear and fascination about his experience at night, leading him to claim that the nighttime city was equally busy but with different characters and attitudes that revealed how "under all that gaiety Montreal is a violent town."¹³ Although the intrepid contributor wrote with superficial knowledge about Montreal's distinct nighttime communities, his observation evoked a persistent problem with the city's image: the city was urbane during the day but perilous at night. Montreal had been transforming at an extraordinary rate since the mid-1950s but, and as the article revealed, if one were to scratch the surface that glamour faded quickly.

Any suggestion that Expo 67 was a glamorous and modern urban achievement was complicated by the undercurrent of anxiety that ran through the festivities. In March 1966, a few months before *Maclean's* published its report, Montreal police, the Quebec Provincial Police, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police established a special brigade to counter the threat of prostitution, illegal gambling, and drug and alcohol trafficking in nightspots. They acted on internal reports that suggested that international criminal organizations would descend on Montreal to lay the foundations of their businesses during Expo.¹⁴ According to one source these organizations had been renting apartment units by the hundreds for incoming sex workers

¹³ Ian Adams, "A Big Town Becomes a Great City," *Maclean's*, 3 December 1966.

¹⁴ See de Champlain, *Histoire du crime organisé*, 258-64.

said to be numbering three thousand.¹⁵ Thus, in tabloid newspapers coverage about Expo revealed problems of social order as articles elicited panic over security and moral well-being by sensationalizing stories about, not only incoming sex workers, but incoming pickpockets, counterfeiters, motorcycle gangs, gangsters, and vermin.¹⁶ Moreover, reports discussed how the event would attract “undesirable” youths, including loitering hippies, rock concert-goers, and drug users. Historian Greg Marquis’s study of the federal Commission of Inquiry into the Non-Medical Use of Drugs (the Le Dain Commission) shows that the event helped create Montreal’s new drug scene, much to the ire of Jean Drapeau and the Civic Party.¹⁷ Teenaged users hung around squares and parks, including at Man and His World, while those of drinking age went to coffee houses, discotheques, and bars. The authorities’ crackdown on nightspots thus began with articles and corresponding police reports that informed the public about “undesirables” and lawbreakers who tried to reap the multifaceted and urban benefits of a world’s fair.¹⁸

But because the event relied heavily on tourists spending time and money in the nighttime economy one of the most alarming threats involved B-drink hustlers commonly referred to as “bargirls.” Found in establishments serving alcohol, bargirls – surreptitiously employed cis or trans women, or men in drag – were commonplace in mid-twentieth-century North American cities.¹⁹ A bargirl earned money by receiving a percentage of the income she helped the establishment generate, which she did by mingling with male patrons and enticing

¹⁵ Jean-Claude Trait, “La pègre a déjà loué des milliers de chambres et d’appartements,” *Le Petit Journal*, 17 April 1966. Jean-Claude Trait, “Pour loger les prostituées (immigrées) l’an prochain la pègre a déjà loué des milliers de chambres et d’appartements,” *La Patrie*, 17 April 1966.

¹⁶ Straw, “Tabloid Expo,” 224.

¹⁷ Greg Marquis, “Constructing an Urban Drug Ecology in 1970s Canada,” *Urban History Review/Revue d’histoire urbaine* vol. 42, no. 1 (Fall 2013): 32-4.

¹⁸ For more on the historical link between fairs and crime see Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003). Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

¹⁹ See Kenneth Marlowe, *Mr. Madam: Confessions of a Male Madam* (Los Angeles: Sherbourne Press, 1964), 22, 80-4.

them to buy her drinks (which were in fact non-alcoholic). Therefore, clients paid for a bargirl's scotch, crème de menthe, or champagne and she received diluted tea, coloured sugar water, or ginger ale – and, unlike alcoholic beverages, she could consume those by the dozen. Drinks usually cost \$1.50 and bargirls received from forty to fifty cents for every “phoney” sold in the afternoon, and from fifteen to twenty-five cents at night; over the course of a week they could consume up to five hundred phoneys.²⁰ Underpaid performing artists often participated in this scheme when, after their performance, they sat down with clients to converse over drinks or demand tips. Sometimes, however, they were more discreet and simply billed clients after taking a seat with them. Sensational stories about ordinary clients, like one man who received a \$190 bill for champagne he shared with a female employee in a Drummond Street cabaret, revealed the costly outcome. Another article reported that an Eastern Townships college professor was handed a \$160 tab for buying a few drinks and spending an hour and half with a performer, and another told the story of a New Yorker who was handed a \$110 bill for talking to and spending less than an hour with a female employee.²¹ Thus the “bargirl” scheme was amplified by tourists who warned others of the systematic money heist and of the “rudeness and belligerent insistence on tips by club personnel.”²² As the director of the Montreal Municipal tourist Bureau Lucien Bergeron noted in the months leading to Expo, these practices were tarnishing the city's image and held the potential of becoming “deadly for business.”²³ Some women and trans B-drink

²⁰ “L'adoption d'un nouveau règlement municipal à Montréal est en voie de provoquer une nouvelle crise dans l'industrie du cabaret,” *Allo Police*, 26 March 1967. Littauer, “The B-Girl Evil,” 176. Picard, *Ma vie dans les bordels*, 128. Champlain, *Histoire du crime organisé*, 293.

²¹ “Il faut de toute urgence empêcher l'exploitation des ‘poissons’ dans les cabarets,” *Dimanche-Matin*, 2 October 1966. “Ici, on ne boit pas sur le bras!,” *Journal de Montréal*, 12 June 1969. Paul Dubois, “Gilbert Wants Bars Better Lit, No Sitting With Customers,” *Montreal Gazette*, 15 August 1966.

²² Roger Newman, “Quebec Viewpoint: Clip joints mar Montreal's image,” *Globe and Mail*, 30 December 1966.

²³ “Tourist Time ... Not like it used to be but going up, up and up,” *Montreal Gazette*, 22 May 1965.

hustlers were arrested and charged for fraud in 1965 and 1966, but were acquitted because prosecutors could not provide incriminating evidence.²⁴

Although the issue was one of petty theft or dishonesty, tabloid articles allowed the municipal administration to articulate a discourse about the need to control women working in nightspots. To put it another way, the same tabloids that Mayor Drapeau had so openly loathed in the 1950s now allowed him to legitimately develop a regulation that would remove “undesirable” women from the nighttime economy. As in other cities, the concern was not for women who had to resort to this work to supplement meagre incomes, or the fact that it must have exposed them to some dangerous situations. Rather, the concern was for male victims.²⁵ To this end, authorities identified several factors that had been sustaining the fraudulent scheme and concluded that in most cases it was the establishment’s darkness and intimacy that was to blame, particularly in small and dingy venues that offered erotic shows.²⁶ The venues’ darkness created a state of confusion for clients who could not decipher bills during transactions or the ridiculous price rates, and the intimacy allowed employees to pickpocket and rob them. Undercover agents from the Quebec Provincial Police (QPP) noted that certain nightclubs were too dim and, at times, simply didn’t have any light. For instance, during one police check an owner told officers to stop searching for a light switch. “There are no lights here,” he revealed.²⁷ Montreal’s chief of police Jean-Paul Gilbert told reporters in jest that he didn’t expect “these places to be lighted up like soda fountains [b]ut something must be done.”²⁸

²⁴ See court cases *R. c. Colabro* (1965) and *R. c. Théodore* (1966) in Durand, “Analyse de la production et de l’application d’une norme pénale,” 51.

²⁵ Christine Sismondo, *America Walks into a Bar: A Spirited History of Taverns and Saloons, Speakeasies, and Grog Shops* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2011), 244-5.

²⁶ Durand, “Analyse de la production et de l’application d’une norme pénale,” 62.

²⁷ “Le directeur Gilbert entre en lutte contre les clubs de nuit mal éclairés,” *La Presse*, 15 August 1966.

²⁸ “Fleeing Complaints: Shady Night Clubs In the Spotlight,” *Montreal Star*, 15 August 1966.

Before elected officials passed a bylaw, however, police raided the city's "bargirl row" on Sainte-Catherine Street and Saint-Laurent Boulevard. QPP Chief Joseph-Adrien Robert led the crackdown, which produced hundreds of charges and arrests. "Clubs that serve juveniles, hoodlums, and prostitutes, clubs that tolerate disorder and water their drinks or in any way violate the law," he announced in the aftermath, "can expect daily visits from our men – and full scale raids." After ending his term as Montreal chief of police in 1965, Robert was hired to lead the police force mandated with upholding liquor laws. Indeed, unlike the Montreal Police Department, the QPP could keep law and order in establishments serving alcohol by revoking liquor permits or charging those who broke liquor laws. Meanwhile, the new chief of police for the Montreal Police Department Jean-Paul Gilbert corroborated that "everyone in the city is influenced by Expo these days – including the police."²⁹ Detectives and officers working for both Gilbert and Robert collaborated and acted on every complaint they received, which led the *Montreal Star* to conclude that "[s]eldom has the heat on the city's dives been so intense."³⁰ Despite clear jurisdictional boundary, including the fact that municipal authorities had no legal control over liquor permits and laws, Chief Gilbert sent a request to the Montreal executive committee asking it to come up with a plan that could end fraudulent schemes.

On 8 February 1967 the executive committee drafted an "anti-mingling" bylaw. Because this draft only regulated female employees' behaviours it showed that authorities were more serious about uprooting the sex industry from licenced establishments than they were about protecting clients.³¹ But one month later, after adjusting the bylaw so that it applied to all employees, the city passed bylaw 3416, which made it "unlawful for any employee of any

²⁹ Tim Burke, "Police Launch Night Club War," *Montreal Star*, 26 July 1966.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Bylaw project, "La conduite de certains employés dans les établissements où l'on sert des boissons alcooliques." City of Montreal, executive committee Meeting Minutes, 8 February 1967. VM074-6-D071, AVM.

establishment dispensing alcoholic beverages or for any entertainer thereof to mingle with the customers of the establishment, to drink, dance or sit at the same table or counter with a customer.”³² Later, Chief Gilbert reported that it had been inspired by similar initiatives in New York, Chicago, New Orleans, Miami, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.³³ And like authorities in those cities, Montreal was optimistic that the bylaw would end soliciting and dishonesty in nightspots. Members of the executive committee told journalists that it was a step against sex workers, against women and trans performers, and against nightclubs that served phonies.³⁴ Though he did not support the bylaw outright, Quebec Liquor Board chair, Judge Marc Lacoste, supported the essence of the pre-Expo crackdown, guaranteeing that the Board was ready to shoulder its responsibility to protect Montrealers and tourists:

Take notice, you who hold permits, that you must supervise the persons responsible for your establishments and that on founded complaints, the Board will use its powers to suspend a permit for the period it determines. If an establishment ... houses a shameless system of exploitation of tourists or a category of the underworld, drug addicts, commercialized vice, or habitual illegalities, the permit holder will be duly summoned and the law will follow its course.³⁵

From the start officers applied the bylaw indiscriminately and ruthlessly, meaning that performing artists like dancers, musicians, and singers who stepped off the stage to join friends, family, or admirers in the audience – whether for a drink or a conversation – were equally targeted.³⁶ Within the span of days police arrested and charged employees for mingling and managers for allowing it. “They say that the bylaw was adopted to fight prostitution,” observed a writer for *Le Monde du Spectacle*, “[but] it’s a pretty funny way to crackdown on prostitution. Everyone knows that 99.9% of Montreal’s prostitutes never set foot on a cabaret stage. Someone

³² City of Montreal, By-law No. 3416, *Behaviour of certain employees in establishments dispensing alcoholic beverages* (9 March 1967).

³³ See Annex I and II for a list of American “anti-mingling” bylaws in Durand, “Analyse de la production et de l’application d’une norme pénale,” 47.

³⁴ “Step Against Prostitution: New Bylaw Cracks Down On Bar Girl Mingling,” *Montreal Star*, 10 March 1967. Maurice Archambault, “Échec au racolage et à la prostitution,” *Montréal-matin*, 10 March 1967. Florian Bernard, “Montréal adopte des règlements sévères contre la prostitution dans les cabarets,” *La Presse*, 10 March 1967.

³⁵ Malcolm Daigneault, “Clubs ‘On the Main’ Face Big Crackdown,” *Montreal Gazette*, 12 April 1967.

³⁶ Al Palmer, “Visit A Cabaret? Well, Don’t Chat With Employees,” *Montreal Gazette*, 12 April 1967.

around here has to be kidding.”³⁷ Later, a cabaret owner would claim that the bylaw had reduced business to the brink of bankruptcy and contended that authorities did everything in their power to “have cabarets disappear, that’s clear!”³⁸ As Chapter 1 showed, Mayor Drapeau largely ignored businessowners who claimed that rules and regulations were bad for business; all he wanted was for people to follow the laws that upheld order, honesty, and morality. A decade later, he held the same position. Like the reforms that he had led in the 1950s, this one concerned public perception in two distinct ways: apprehending perceived criminals and upholding Montreal’s image as an honest and moral city. Certainly, Drapeau and members of the city’s executive committee saw how the bylaw could restore the city’s image and reputation, which is what counted most to them. For others, like cabaret owners, the anti-mingling bylaw not only transformed business, but threatened the connectivity of urban life.

Though the terms of the bylaw clearly did not target prostitution per se, authorities constantly claimed that it was an effective tool with which to combat sex work. And given the police crackdown on the nighttime economy it held some truth. Sex workers confirmed that in the leadup to and during Expo 67 they had to steer away from nightspots, because they feared that officers would charge them – not under the anti-mingling bylaw – but under the article of the Criminal Code that punished prostitution and acts that were believed to be connected to it: vagrancy, solicitation in public places, and loitering.³⁹

Two prominent madams, Martha Adams and Rita Picard, revealed more about the authorities’ practices during this period. Born in 1930 in Disraeli, a small community in the

³⁷ “Une bien drôle de façon de combattre la prostitution,” *Le Monde du Spectacle*, 20-6 March 1967.

³⁸ Martin Pronovost, “Le juge sort du tiroir un vieux règlement municipal!,” *La Presse*, 25 July 1967. Guy Lessonini, “Grandeurs et misères du Montréal by night,” *Le Nouveau Samedi*, 21 March 1970.

³⁹ Thérèse Limoges, *La Prostitution à Montréal : comment, pourquoi certaines femmes deviennent prostituées* (Montreal: Les éditions de l’homme, 1967), 65-8.

Eastern Townships, Martha Adams had been one of the cabaret performers who saw her livelihood vanish as police increased cabaret raids.⁴⁰ In contrast to what articles and reports claimed, however, she recalled mingling with friendly customers and hustling genuine drinks: “Between dances, we had to ‘mingle’ as we called it then, meaning taking a seat with people who were alone. [...] So I’d go and sit with them and the bartender would serve us champagne. I’d never had any before and I’d take two glasses and, by the time I headed back to the dance floor, I was tipsy. But every time I’d sweat out the alcohol.”⁴¹ She also revealed that throughout the early-1950s mingling led to generous tips, especially from wealthy tourists from the United States and out-of-province Canadians. When reformers upended cabaret work in Montreal, however, she saw no other choice but to move to Ontario to pursue her line of work.⁴² Freshly out of prison, Rita Picard also described Expo 67’s atmosphere. Like many other sex workers, she could not work in nightspots due to intense police surveillance and raids. But the alternative, at least for her, was not particularly bad. She rented a penthouse on Sherbrooke Street where, along with five employees, she serviced over two thousand clients throughout the event – including diplomats, businessmen, and tourists from around the world.⁴³ While sex work might have been entangled in the nighttime service industry, as these women noted, it did not mean that all women who worked in the industry were sex workers. Still, the emphasis that elected officials and the media placed on the bylaw’s ability to uproot sex workers from the service

⁴⁰ Martha Adams published her autobiography during a sensational 1972 court case – highly reminiscent of the Caron Inquiry. Adams was accused of prostitution and of running, from her own apartment, a brothel involving 40 women. Provincial morality squads showed how her network extended to Boston, New York, Vancouver, Toronto, Halifax, and Quebec City – Making Montreal the headquarter of a vast North American prostitution ring. The trial’s scandalous edge revolved around her lawyer’s claim that known police officers, lawyers, magistrates, and politicians were regular clients. She was convicted for the fourteenth time and sentenced to one year in prison in 1973. See *Affaire Martha Adams*, Dossier Moralité 961.31, AVM.

⁴¹ Adams, *Martha Adams*, 136-8.

⁴² For more see Chapter 5 “Prostitution,” in Adams, *Martha Adams*.

⁴³ Picard, *Ma vie dans les bordels*, 71.

industry gave Montrealers the impression that all women working in the service industry were somehow involved in sex work (fig. 6).



Figure 6: A cartoon conflates the notion that women who work in establishments serving alcohol are also involved in sex work. It reads, "Tourist season is afoot: police administer the 'famous 3416'" while the officer warns, "Hey! No mingling!" Daigneault, "La saison des touristes commence: La police applique le 'Fameux 3416,'" *Le Petit Journal*, 1 June 1969.

Ultimately, the anti-mingling bylaw could not be, as elected officials claimed, an effective tool to combat prostitution since it did not help officers decipher who was or was not a sex worker. For instance, at Bar des Arts, a cabaret located at 286 Sainte-Catherine Street West, police officers used the bylaw to arrest five female employees and the manager. The events that occurred that night, and described during the trial, gives insight into the kind of scenario that fuelled frustration among employees and owners. The trial, worth quoting at some length, reveals how the bylaw required extensive and sexist monitoring by officers:

Constable Gaudreault testified that [...] he entered the premises in question, followed shortly after by Constable Dufour and both sat at a table and both remained in the club for the purpose of making observations and subsequent arrests for a period of at least an hour and a half.

Colette Hargray [...] was sitting at a nearby table with two men and was drinking from a glass, though the officer could not testify if it was an alcoholic beverage. Later, she got up on the table where she had been sitting with two clients of the establishment and danced on the table. She told the officer that she worked in the kitchen of the establishment and later was arrested there.

Monique Kemp [...] stated she was acting as waitress and serving clients but, at certain times, she would come and sit at a table with four or five young people.

Jeannine Fournier [...] was described by the witness as a waitress and dancer with the cabaret and, while acting in this capacity, from time to time, would come back and hold a conversation with three men at a table and, finally, when there was a free chair, she sat down with them.

Dawne Kye [...] though she was not present [during trial], evidence was taken concerning her activities at the time and place in question. Testimony was given to the effect that the defendant was a waitress-dancer employed by this establishment and, from time to time, after serving other clients, she would come back to this particular table and sit on the knee of a client.

Lucie Russel [...] the testimony is to the effect that she was a waitress but between serving clients at different tables, she would come back and sit at a table with two clients of the establishment.

Leo-Paul Champagne [...] he was arrested by the senior officers at time of the raid as being in charge of the establishment. Constable Marcel Dufour corroborated the testimony of Constable Gaudreault concerning the other defendants and with respect to Leo-Paul Champagne, he testified that he was at the bar of the cabaret and seemed to be in charge of the establishment. Sergeant Poitras who was in charge of the Police operation, testified that on his arrival there with other officers, around 21.00 hrs, that Constables Gaudreault and Dufour pointed out to him the foregoing defendants and he arrested them. He also stated that the female defendants were permitted to use the coat room to secure additional clothing.⁴⁴

The bylaw was enacted to address the problems that reformers deemed persistent within the nighttime economy: dishonesty, swindling, and sex work. However, as this particular trial revealed, the police's ability to identify lawbreakers was limited, which led officers to use the bylaw against a prosaic and harmless nighttime culture. The trial also showed how authorities tightened their grip over the nighttime economy by scrutinizing how women behaved in nightspots. In fact, before Expo had started, nightclub singer Joan Hill Sabatini was charged under the bylaw for sitting at a table with a client. She petitioned for a writ of evocation at the Quebec Superior Court wherein she claimed that the bylaw was unconstitutional because it contravened the Canadian Bill of Rights.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *Hargray et al. v. City of Montreal* [1971] Montreal Municipal Court. Colette Hargray was not employed by Bar des Arts, therefore her case was dismissed without costs; Monique Kemp was found guilty with a sentence of \$20 and costs; Jeannine Fournier's charge was dismissed without costs; Dawne Kye was found guilty as charged and sentenced to \$50 and costs; Lucie Russell was found guilty as charged and sentenced to \$25 and costs; Leo-Paul Champagne was found guilty as charged and was sentenced to \$50 and costs.

⁴⁵ "Nightclub 'Mingling' Bylaw Facing Challenge In Court," *Montreal Gazette*, 11 April 1967. "Writ Halts Mingling Court Case," *Montreal Gazette*, 12 April 1967. *L'Abbé v. City of Montreal* (1967) [1968] Q.B. 419.

Years after Expo 67 Quebec historian Robert Rumilly stated that Montreal was the capital of world and that Man and His World was its epicentre during 1967.⁴⁶ Indeed, the event defied any previous ideas that Montreal was not a “world-class” city, thereby allowing it to gain an international reputation. According to pundits, the event was a smashing success; it was a celebration of world culture and a demonstration of the time’s most memorable artistic creativity. Playing a part in this success were architects like Frei Otto and Buckminster Fuller, musical acts ranging from The Supremes to Luciano Pavarotti and Marlene Dietrich, and dignitaries, heads of state, and royal family members all enticed others to see and experience the megaevent. Between 27 April and 29 October 1967 Expo drew fifty million visitors to Man and His World.⁴⁷

By the time Expo’s activities were in full swing, the city’s nightlife had undergone a profound transformation. This transformation was, in part, shaped by officers’ enforcements of regulations in low-incoming neighbourhoods and the relaxation of those same restrictions in the city’s swankier nightclubs and at Man and His World. For instance, the district attorney for the city ordered taxi drivers to avoid specific nightspots near the Red Light district, and singled out Café Casbah because it featured drag shows.⁴⁸ Moreover, repeated raids by the police – as many as half a dozen in a single evening for some venues – was enough to scare clients from heading off the beaten track, which led one nightlife journalist to conclude that the “night club business is shot in Montreal.”⁴⁹ For authorities the goal remained simple: keep tourists in areas that magnify Montreal’s splendour. Therefore, tourists were gently corralled to Man and His World’s restaurants, discotheques, beer gardens, concert hall, theatre, and the enormous

⁴⁶ Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de Montréal : Tome V 1939-1967* (Montreal: Fides, 1974), 229-49, 269-80.

⁴⁷ See Michel Barbeau, Guylaine Maroist, and Éric Ruel (dirs.), *Expo 67 Mission Impossible* (Montreal: La Ruelle Films, 2017).

⁴⁸ Podmore, “Queering Discourses of Urban Decline,” 72.

⁴⁹ Fitz, “On & Off the Record,” *Montreal Gazette*, 24 July 1967.

amusement park, which, taken together, provided ample entertainment. By keeping tourists and visitors at the site the city brought much-needed revenue to Expo, which eased some of the debt it had accrued in building it. Thus, while authorities enforced the bylaw in low-income or disreputable neighbourhoods they dismissed it where wealthy tourists blended with Montreal's elite at Man and His World where establishments served alcohol past the lawful hour. As one journalist remarked, "Montreal police on Expo duty haven't bothered the performers... there seems to be no barrier to 'mingling' between employees and customers on the site."⁵⁰

Racial prejudice also played an active role in how the Police Department regulated the nighttime economy during Expo. In one instance officers raided the historically Black Harlem Paradise and charged six women under the "anti-mingling" bylaw, and on that same night they also raided Sahara, a nearby cabaret where they charged a twenty-one-year-old Turkish woman whose performance "had particularly captivated [the officers'] attention."⁵¹ Throughout 1967 officers policed racialized women's behaviours differently, and as research shows Blacks were prosecuted at a statistically higher rate than any other racial or ethnic group in Montreal during that year.⁵² A couple of weeks after the raids at Sahara and Harlem Paradise, two police officers returned to the latter to apprehend women. Disguised as sailors, the officers did not charge anyone under the bylaw since they did not witness any "mingling." However, upon leaving Harlem Paradise they were solicited by a pimp who asked the supposed sailors if they "would like some women" and "quoted them a price of \$25 for each of them." After having been ushered into a nearby tourist room the officers charged a sex worker for prostitution and the

⁵⁰ "On & Off the Record," *Montreal Gazette*, 8 May, 1967. "Trois autres danseuses 'topless' appréhendées," *La Presse*, 8 May 1967. Raymond Drouin, "Il n'y aura pas de seins nus à Montréal, Durant l'Expo...", *Dimanche-Matin*, 2 April 1967. "Pendant qu'on traque les 'topless', les 'gros légumes' font des orgies," *Le Monde du Spectacle*, 10-16 April 1967. Lise Lapierre, "La loi existe ou n'existe pas," *Photo-Journal*, 4-11 October 1967.

⁵¹ "Arrestation de sept femmes," *La Presse*, 18 May 1967.

⁵² Lacasse, *La Prostitution féminine à Montréal*, 47.

pimp under the Criminal Code's bawdy-house law.⁵³ Although the officers' stakeout at Harlem Paradise had failed, a coincidental encounter in public space was enough to convince the Police Department that the venue, and its neighbourhood, should be monitored. Less than two weeks later officers returned to Harlem Paradise. And this time they used the anti-mingling bylaw to charge two employees for "molesting" a patron, a third one for mingling, and the club owner for "permitting his employees to sit with the customer."⁵⁴

The extent of the Police Department's racial prejudice was mocked at the end of that year during the "African Ballet Affair."⁵⁵ The Affair unfolded when Les Ballets Africains (Guinea's national dance company) stopped in Montreal during its North American tour. After performing in Quebec, Joliette, Sherbrooke, Ottawa, and Sorel, the dance company, comprised of thirty males and thirteen females, was set for a residency at Place des Arts from 5 to 20 December 1967. On the first night undercover agents, seated in the front row, observed attentively; they took notes and snapshots of the performance – especially during the three scenes when female dancers performed topless. The following night, during the show's intermission, Lieutenant Detective Paul Boisvert issued a summons to five underaged dancers, to the troupe's director Sekou Sakho, and to the show's producer Elise Pouliot, under provisions of the Criminal Code's "sexual offences, public morals, and disorderly conduct." Although the Police Department did not invoke the "anti-mingling" bylaw in this case, the manoeuvre was connected to the city's wider cleanup project. Numerous artists, activists, and even a clergyman, wrote about the absurdity of the whole affair and commented on the way that Jean Drapeau was

⁵³ *Rioux v. R.* [1968] Q.B. 876. The pimp (who was charged on the night of 7 July 1967) appealed the charge and the court dropped the case on 12 June 1968.

⁵⁴ "Ten persons arrested in raid on two clubs," *Montreal Gazette*, 20 July 1967.

⁵⁵ The history of policing the African company can be traced back to March 1959 when a similar event unfolded. For more on policing, nudity, and race see Chapter 1 in Melissa Templeton, "Polyrhythmic Dance Currents: Race Multiculturalism and the Montreal Dance Community," (PhD diss. (Critical Dance Studies), University of California Riverside, 2012).

killing culture in Montreal.⁵⁶ After public uproar, the municipal court dropped all charges, including the one against Elise Pouliot who had been charged with producing an indecent show. In his statement Municipal Court Judge Henri Beaulieu argued that police officers had overlooked the cultural and artistic value of the show: “It appears that the young girls were chosen for their dancing ability, not to satisfy or whet the audience’s sexual appetite.”⁵⁷ The Morality Squad’s coarse analysis of the performance – its sexualization of African artistic expression – exposed the racist codes and attitudes that Black Montrealers continuously faced throughout the mid-twentieth-century.⁵⁸

In the years following Expo 67 police officers continued using the anti-mingling bylaw, but in a different manner. Thus far we have seen how the anti-mingling bylaw was used largely against women employed in the service industry and against their managers. After Expo, however, officers reenforced the boundaries of heteronormativity by using it in queer drinking establishments and against employed gay men. Notably, the anti-mingling bylaw was used against five employees of the Hawaiian Lounge after they had had drinks with clients; the manager was also arrested for allowing mingling.⁵⁹ Moreover, police constantly raided cabarets, like Béret Bleu and Chez Patee, which were known gay hangouts. Eventually, a municipal court judge had both historic establishments close after receiving police reports that disclosed, amongst other things, that Chez Patee employees had been charged some three hundred times

⁵⁶ Pierre Hébert, Yves Lever, and Kenneth Landry, *Dictionnaire de la censure au Québec : littérature et cinéma* (Saint-Laurent : Fides, 2006), 65-6.

⁵⁷ Oswald Mamo, “Les danseuses aux seins nus n’étaient pas indécentes,” *La Presse*, 26 January 1968.

⁵⁸ See David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex, and Security in Sixties Montreal* (Toronto: Between the Lines 2013).

⁵⁹ “Le règlement 3416 vaut aussi pour les hommes,” *La Presse*, 20 April 1970.

under the city's anti-mingling bylaw. Although a legal challenge followed, each establishment's fate was sealed.⁶⁰

The sum of these raids, which led to thousands of charges and arrests, reveals how police operations could not have been randomized. Rather, officers assessed the need to monitor or raid certain venues based on the clientele's socioeconomic status, race, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Sometimes, however, officers were more discreet. Dressed as civilians, they entered establishments and waited until they observed nonnormative patterns of behaviours. All of this led to legal challenges. At the Quebec Court of Appeal three female performers argued that the City of Montreal acted beyond its powers because the power to regulate, punish, or prohibit behaviours was of provincial authority. Further, they contended that the power to regulate did not include the power to prohibit acts that have nothing to do with the consumption of alcohol. However, Chief Justice of Quebec Lucien Tremblay and Justices Paul Casey and Garon Pratte dismissed these constitutional challenges.⁶¹

To gauge public opinion on the anti-mingling bylaw the *Journal de Montreal* decided to hold an informal street vox pop. The tabloid interviewed five men, each of whom stated his staunch opposition to it: "I fail to understand why I can't sit with my buddies who work at a licenced establishment," said one. "I work at a bar," revealed another, "and to be frank this bylaw is stupid because no one can stop me from sitting with someone. The police have been enforcing this bylaw and it's doing a lot of harm."⁶² One of the daily's journalists published

⁶⁰ Leon Levinson, "Nightclubs lose bids for restaurant permits," *Montreal Gazette*, 30 June 1970. Michel Auger, "La police ferme les cabarets 'Chez Patee' et le 'Béret Bleu'," *La Presse*, 24 December 1970. "Montréal veut obtenir la fermeture du 'Béret Bleu'," *La Presse*, 27 August 1971. See *Soccio v. Régie des alcools du Québec* (1971) [1972] Q.C.A. 283.

⁶¹ *L'Abbé v. City of Montreal* (1968) [1969] Q.B. 1098. Jean Denechaud, "Le règlement interdisant aux danseuses de se mêler aux clients déclaré valide," *La Presse*, 9 November 1968.

⁶² "Pour ou contre le règlement 3416 interdisant aux employés de cabarets de fraterniser avec les clients?," *Journal de Montréal*, 29 February 1968.

articles lamenting the way that multiple reforms, like the anti-mingling bylaw, forced Montrealers to self-police.⁶³ Roused by outrage and claims of an undemocratic handling of nightspots, these individuals demanded that the municipal administration cease its interventionist creed to save the nighttime industry.

By the end of the 1960s establishments were forced to close because of insurmountable legal fees following anti-mingling court cases. A famous businessowner who lost large sums of money contesting the bylaw in court recalled with nostalgia the halcyon days of Montreal nights. “The good times are over!” he exclaimed resentfully, “the anti-mingling bylaw has floored all business.”⁶⁴ Like the reforms initiated during the mid-1950s, those administered during the mid-1960s allowed the municipal administration to strengthen its rule over night and thus make Montreal’s nighttime industry more honest and in line with its vision of morality. While City Hall could claim that its orders had, in fact, ended forms of criminal activity, it had also brought an end to a nightlife culture that many businessowners, employees, and performing artists depended on. As one embittered jazz musician later told historian John Gilmore, “Expo cut the throat and let the blood out of the city.”⁶⁵

In response to unpopular reforms, many Montrealers, including playwrights and cartoonists, criticized the municipal administration’s regulation of night. “This country is fighting against a relentless darkness, an impetuous evil that it calls ‘impurity’,” wrote playwright André Langevin.⁶⁶ His play, *L’œil du peuple*, placed the spotlight on the cultural and moral war that the Civic Action League had waged in the mid-1950s. The main character of the

⁶³ Claude Jodoin, “L’opération nettoyage : razzia dans 13 clubs qui « nous » coûte cher et qui rapporte peu!,” *Journal de Montreal*, 20 July 1970. Claude Jodoin, “Raids ‘rituels’ dans les clubs : à pas de tortue, cette fois... et pourtant aussi efficaces,” *Journal de Montréal*, 27 July 1970. Claude Jodoin, *Montréal insolite: Un Guide pour Oiseaux de Nuit* (Montreal: Éditions Beljo, 1974), 19.

⁶⁴ Guy Lessonini, “Grandeurs et misères du Montréal by night,” *Le Nouveau Samedi*, 21 March 1970.

⁶⁵ Interview with Dennis Brown (1982) quoted in Gilmore, *Swinging in Paradise*, 226.

⁶⁶ André Langevin, *L’œil du peuple, comédie en trois actes* (Montréal: Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, 1957), 5.

award-winning comedy crusaded against immoral activities during the day while, at night, he would take part in illicit pleasures. The play's décor – a conference room of a political party's executive committee – was conspicuous, and the theme was topical for Montreal theatregoers. Elsewhere, a 1969 two-page spread in the student newspaper *Quartier latin* illustrated Montreal's cultural, political, and physical transformation (fig. 7). The cartoonist depicted Jean Drapeau as a godsent agent who purges Montreal of a sinister vermin – a crusade that earns him the nickname “Don Quixote of the Main.” Paralleling this triumphant story are illustrations of disreputable, denuded, and defecating women. The cartoon was a comment on the way that the mayor had used his political power to reorganize urban infrastructures and urban life. It showed the investments he made to regulate, control, and manage Montrealers who formed part of the city's disreputable and (il)licit nighttime economy, and the gendered vision upon which this campaign relied.



Figure 7: Marc-Antoine Nadeau, "L'être le plus extraordinaire que j'aie connu. Jean Drapeau," Quartier latin, 1 October 1969.

Montreal Nightlife and the Thinel Commission

After Expo 67 had come and gone, and as the city continued to regulate its nighttime economy, the Quebec government formed an inquiry to look at the multifaceted issue of alcohol consumption in the province. The inquiry was formed in a tense atmosphere after employees of

the Quebec Liquor Board (QLB) had gone on two strikes – a first one that lasted eleven weeks from December 1964 to February 1965, and a second one that lasted from June to November 1968.⁶⁷ Toward the end of the second strike a “scandal” erupted in the suburbs of Quebec City when a chief of police seized a shipment of nearly ten thousand spirits that, allegedly, the QLB was sending to New Brunswick despite the ongoing strike.⁶⁸ Although it was later proven that the shipment was not illicit but in fact destined for the Quebec market, Quebec Premier Jean-Jacques Bertrand announced the formation of a Royal Commission to probe Quebec’s liquor market and the government-owned body overseeing it.⁶⁹ Nearly a half-century had elapsed since the QLB’s creation in 1921, and, needless to say, Quebec society had undergone profound transformations during this period. Headed by Justice Lucien Thinel, the inquiry investigated alcohol commerce in Quebec since 1964 in an attempt to make its monitoring cheaper and more efficient. To achieve this goal the inquiry included two other members, Quebec City accountant Marcel Belanger and Montreal economist Otto Thur.

Montreal had a lot to gain (or lose) from this inquiry. Throughout the early-twentieth-century Quebec’s liquor laws were the envy of Canadians who opposed the temperance movement. Al Palmer would even claim that “[t]here is more personal freedom in Quebec than in any other province and your right to drink what and when you please has been safeguarded by the sanest set of liquor laws in the Dominion.”⁷⁰ Although Palmer conflated the leniency of liquor enforcement with the actual freedoms guaranteed by the law, he nevertheless touched on a widespread feeling among people who lived in or visited Quebec: the province offered more

⁶⁷ For more on those strikes see Prévost, Gagné, and Phaneuf, *L’histoire de l’alcool au Québec*, 132-5.

⁶⁸ Pierre Bernier, Marc-André Brault, and Georges-N. Parent, “La Régie des alcools du Québec,” *Les Cahiers de droit*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1966-1967): 63-103.

⁶⁹ “Déclaration ministérielle,” *Journal des débats de l’Assemblée nationale*, 12 November 1968, Bibliothèque de l’Assemblée nationale du Québec.

⁷⁰ Palmer, *Montreal Confidential*, 134.

freedom than any other Canadian province when dealing with liquor consumption.⁷¹ The probe eventually found that liquor laws were broken, not so much because of negligent officers, but because the Quebec Liquor Board had not evolved alongside Quebec's social mores. For instance, under the Sunday Observance Act, alcohol could not be sold in theatres on Sunday. Later, the commissioners would state that since this act was "neither applied nor applicable" it had to be repealed as part of sweeping reforms.⁷²

For Montreal's municipal administration, there was no widespread disagreement over specific and mundane details such as the one above. Rather, it was another issue that elicited its attention, one that it believed should be at the heart of liquor legislation reform. This issue concerned the fact that the policing of liquor permits and laws remained under the authority of a handful of Sûreté du Québec officers. The Civic Party contended that these officers – though they benefited from the Sûreté's intelligence – were ill-equipped and could not prevent local criminals from controlling Montreal's nighttime economy. The party based this on Montreal Police Department reports, which claimed that gangsters and lawbreakers of all kinds persistently trafficked sex, drugs, and stolen goods in establishments serving alcohol.⁷³ Therefore, city authorities saw a golden opportunity when the inquiry announced that its main objective was to tie liquor consumption to "order and revenue." Liquor reform could allow the Montreal Police Department, and by extension members of the municipal administration, greater control over the nighttime economy.

⁷¹ For a Canadian overview see Craig Heron, *Booze: A Distilled History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003).

⁷² Thinel, *Rapport de la commission d'enquête*, 77.

⁷³ See the front-page headline of *Le Devoir*, 29 June 1970. Dan Karon, "City report charges: 'Liquor laws encourage underworld'," *Montreal Gazette*, 30 June 1970. Letter from "a Friend" to Justice Omer Côté, 21 April 1970. VM001-4-2, 721-1, AVM.

As the inquiry was under way, the Montreal Police Department submitted a report to the city's legal team in which it underlined the importance of order, control, and surveillance in establishments serving alcohol. The report would be used as a basis for the city in listing its own recommendations for the inquiry. In the end, the legal team recommended the following reforms to the inquiry: reforming accounting systems for establishments holding liquor permits; designated areas for performances; clearer distinction between establishments serving meals and those selling alcohol; better illumination of drinking establishments; and clearly visible QLB permits posted next to city permits.⁷⁴ Unmistakably, the city believed that implementing a law that emulated Montreal's own anti-mingling bylaw was a good thing. But the city went even further when it evoked the need to make the service industry and its workforce more legible. To that end it recommended a carding system for employees that would identify them by name, photo, and fingerprint.⁷⁵ Furthermore, in its review of lighting standards it claimed that under current laws clients could engage in promiscuous behaviour. "Semi-darkness," the report argued, "yields to an atmosphere in which order and moral standards cannot be held."⁷⁶ Therefore, aesthetics of legibility were found in the way that the city evoked the need for proper permits and illumination, both characteristics of honest labourers and respectable establishments.

Within the Quebec context, effective liquor control raised issues relating to legislative powers and responsibilities, essentially the division between provincial and municipal authority. A small, but not insignificant, change had happened in 1967 when Quebec attorney general, Justice Minister Jean-Jacques Bertrand, granted special authorization for some Montreal Police

⁷⁴ *Mémoire de la ville de Montréal à la Commission d'enquête sur le commerce des boissons alcooliques au Québec* (Montréal : 1970). VM001-4-2, 721-1, AVM.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 12. The report came on the heels of a provincial inquiry into justice reform, which stressed the role that organized crime held in the nighttime economy. See Yves Prévost, *Crime, Justice, and Society* (Quebec: Quebec Official Publisher, 1969).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

Department officers to patrol establishments dispensing alcohol. As previously mentioned, for most of the twentieth century local police departments held no authority over the control of alcohol in cities and could only act in cases involving clandestine sales or when liquor had been sold to underaged clients. But to help local police units maintain order during Expo 67 Justice Minister Bertrand eased restrictions that had been keeping liquor control under provincial authority. Armed with special permits some officers could assess and monitor the threats that had been “posing particular problems to the Police Department.”⁷⁷ As the Thinel Commission was underway a similar and more consequential transfer of power took place. In July 1970 Quebec attorney general, Justice Minister Jérôme Choquette, gave the Montreal Police Department the right to act on matters concerning liquor legislation. Choquette granted these rights to the department after receiving a special request from Montreal’s chief of police. Later, Choquette proudly recalled his decision: “I gave the authorization to all officers of the Montreal Police Department [...] to inspect offences that could be committed concerning alcohol and, also, to handle cases without my authorization as attorney general so that they could cleanup Montreal.”⁷⁸ The Montreal Police Department had submitted its recommendations to the Thinel Commission earlier that year and, before the end of the inquiry, the Quebec government had transferred the power wholesale to the Department. Chief Gilbert’s other recommendations, however, would be addressed at the end of the inquiry. In the meantime, it was becoming clear that liquor legislation reform would address the needs of Quebec’s metropolis.

The Thinel Commission’s 359-page final report was submitted in February 1971. The commissioners offered recommendations for a nouveau régime based on a balance between “order and revenue.” Within this nouveau régime was a section that would address the

⁷⁷ Jean-Paul Gilbert, “Une affaire prioritaire,” *Le Devoir*, 29 June 1970.

⁷⁸ Jérôme Choquette, *Journal des débats de l’Assemblée nationale*, 30 March 1971, Bibliothèque de l’Assemblée nationale du Québec. “1,000 police in drive: City will enforce liquor laws,” *Montreal Star*, 29 July 1970.

provincial liquor legislation's historical weaknesses, which had led to fraudulent schemes like B-drink hustling and price gouging. The commissioners stated that this legal loophole had led Montreal to enact, understandably so, an anti-mingling bylaw:

Some cabaret owners employ [B-drink hustlers], waitresses or dancers, in order to encourage customers to drink and to extort large sums by being offered drinks with low alcohol content. In addition, these procedures often lead, according to police, to unacceptable behaviours in public space. To prevent these abuses, and given the silence of the Quebec Liquor Board on this point, the City of Montreal had to adopt bylaw 3416, which prohibits female staff from mingling with customers.

Therefore, concluded the commissioners, monitoring the behaviour of service industry workers should be the responsibility of the body overseeing liquor legislation, not municipalities, which is why they recommended incorporating a text inspired by the anti-mingling into the provincial legislation with offenders receiving “the most severe criminal and administrative penalties.”⁷⁹

After receiving the Thinel Report the provincial government decided to split the QLB into two bodies. The commission's goal had been to find a balance between “order and revenue,” and the QLB was divided along those lines in July 1971. Since the state believed that profitability rested on modernizing Quebecers' shopping experience it tasked the Quebec Liquor Corporation (known as the SAQ) with managing revenues.⁸⁰ The SAQ shrugged off the QLB's monochromatic image by designing sleek and colourfully attractive stores where clients could see and handle products. Although the SAQ became the exclusive importer and wholesaler of spirits, wine, and beer, the wine monopoly was broken up and opened to retailers, like food stores and supermarkets.⁸¹ Meanwhile, employees of the Liquor Permit Control Commission –

⁷⁹ Thinel, *Rapport de la commission d'enquête*, 126-7.

⁸⁰ Lois annuelles du Québec 1971, ch. 20 *Quebec Liquor Corporation Act* (10 July 1971).

⁸¹ Pierre-L. O'Neill, “La RAQ scindée en deux organismes,” *Le Devoir*, 19 May 1971.

notably its inspectors and investigators – were tasked with upholding the law by issuing, renewing, suspending, and cancelling permits where applicable.⁸²

The Commission addressed the legal limitation that had allowed the City of Montreal to enact its anti-mingling bylaw. In this regard, and clearly acting on recommendations made by the Montreal Police Department, an anti-mingling provision was enacted into law: “No employee of an establishment in which a cabaret permit is used and no person who participates in a performance there shall mingle with the customers of the establishment, drink or dance with them or sit at the same table or counter with them.”⁸³ Unlike Montreal’s bylaw, however, the law targeted employees – not owners – meaning that performing artists remained subject to policing while owners could uphold a criminal system without punishment.⁸⁴ Additionally, the Commission enacted another provision mandating a registration card for all employees of a establishment holding a bar or cabaret permit. Quebec Justice Minister Jérôme Choquette was pleased with these reforms as he agreed that local authorities now had the tools to remove “undesirables and criminals” from the nighttime economy.⁸⁵ By the late-1970s, after further reforms to liquor legislation, the article remained and was mainly used against female erotic dancers.⁸⁶

The legacy of the anti-mingling bylaw stretches far beyond the late-1960s and 1970s. It remained in the books until 1993 when an owner, Pierris Zoumboulakis, was accused of “letting

⁸² The Commission held authority over twenty-three different liquor permits including those for restaurants, bars, pubs, taverns, and cabarets. *Lois annuelles du Québec 1971*, ch. 19 *Liquor Permit Control Commission Act* (7 July 1971).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, Division V, no. 81.

⁸⁴ Shirley Lacasse, “Le travail des danseuses nues : Au-delà du stigmaté, une relation de service marchand,” (PhD diss. (Sociology), Université de Montréal, 2003), IV-V.

⁸⁵ “Deux ministres sont d’accord,” *La Presse*, 19 May 1971. Derek Hill, “Mass liquor law reform urged for more access,” *Montreal Gazette*, 19 May 1971.

⁸⁶ Durand, “Analyse de la production et de l’application d’une norme pénale,” 3.

his staff mingle with the clientele.”⁸⁷ His lawyer, and future leader of the Civic Party, Clément Bluteau, convinced the courts that the bylaw was unconstitutional since it violated the right to freedom of expression guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.⁸⁸

Conclusion

At night, Montrealers and tourists interacted. Some found respite in nightclubs, others in cabarets and, others still, in discotheques. As we saw in Chapter 1, reformers placed sex and the regulation of women’s bodies high on their priority list. The “anti-mingling” bylaw allowed a crackdown on employees – particularly women – in nightclubs, bars, or cabarets at a moment when it looked like Montreal might finally become a “world-class city.” Authorities monitored and regulated nightspots to protect clients from swindlers and sex workers, which transformed the nighttime economy into a suitable and safe marketplace. However, the bylaw’s framework also allowed local police to enforce it based on heteronormativity as well as their own understanding of moral norms. Ultimately the bylaw was enforced not necessarily where officers found swindling B-drink hustlers, but in nightspots where Montrealers of different economic background, race, and sexual orientation mingled. Moreover, because authorities arrested employees for mundane acts like sitting or drinking with clients, it was challenged in courts. Eventually, accruing legal fees forced many establishments to fold, and these closures threw hundreds out of work.

The chapter also reveals the link between the anti-mingling bylaw and reforms to Quebec’s liquor legislation. By tracing the history of liquor law reform back to Montreal’s anti-mingling bylaw, we see how the Civic Party forced not only the Quebec government to act on

⁸⁷ Danny Vear, “Moralité publique : Montréal à nouveau déboutée en cour,” *Le Devoir*, 26 February 1993.

⁸⁸ Shirley Lacasse, “Le travail des danseuses nues,” V.

matters that were specific to the metropolis, but also forced it to cede jurisdictional powers to the Montreal Police Department. Indeed, the Civic Party showed how it could both influence provincial politics and dictate the contours of new laws governing alcohol. Later, and like Expo 67, the city would “clean” its image in a series of similar crackdowns that forced Quebec’s intervention in the leadup to the 1976 Summer Olympics. But before we turn our attention to the Olympics, it is necessary to first look to the very workers who were charged with maintaining order in the city, and the municipal administration’s efforts to keep them under control.

Chapter 3: Essential Services, 1967-1974

On the night of 4 September 1969, at the very same address where the Public Morality Committee was founded in 1950, a veritable shrine to Montreal poet Émile Nelligan opened its doors. The establishment, whose rich décor recreated the opulence of a late-nineteenth-century Golden Square Mile mansion, was adorned with souvenirs, manuscripts, portraits, and a bust of the famous poet.¹ The *Vaisseau d'Or*, named after one of Nelligan's poems, displayed the passion of Jean Drapeau, the venue's owner, for Montreal high culture, and on that night Montreal's elite headed to the establishment for a seven-course service of high cuisine. While their perfumes, and those coming from the establishment's kitchen, made the *Vaisseau d'Or* rich with smells, it was not, like most nighttime establishments, rich with revelry. Under strict directives from the owner, an embargo on light and noise limited the moments when the dining space was lit and when clients could dine and talk. "Since ... *Le Vaisseau d'Or* features music as well as high cuisine," the menu outlined, "one is asked to speak in a low voice. In an effort to minimize conversation with waiters, the menu provides you with a full description of its different items, as well as an order from where you may indicate your choice with a mark at the proper place. We appreciate your contribution to the success of the evening. The procedure outlined will foster your own enjoyment."² To the discontent of many patrons, the owner had placed the emphasis on silence, order, and timeliness rather than on high cuisine. This configuration gave the establishment's twenty-piece orchestra, conducted by Jean-Eudes Vaillancourt, the freedom to perform pieces by Bach and Vivaldi uninterrupted.³ Again, unlike other musically inclined venues – like nightclubs, cabarets, and jazz bars – the staff at the

¹ Lise Lapierre, "D'après Monsieur le Maire Aucun danger au *Vaisseau d'Or*," *Photo-journal* 8-15 October 1969. Fañchoise Kayle, "'Le Vaisseau d'Or' vient d'appareiller," *La Presse*, 9 September 1969.

² *Le Vaisseau d'Or, Menu, Les secrets du chef, Carte des vins*. Dossier *Le Vaisseau d'Or* – Artistes, P100-06-3-D006, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM.

³ "Concert du 4 septembre 1969," *Orchestre du Vaisseau d'Or. Inauguration 1969*, P100-06-3-D002, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM.

Vaisseau d'Or quickly reprimanded clients who spoke during the musical performances, which lead critics to write harshly about the opening night. But the unfavourable press was of little importance to its owner when, just over one month after it opened, it was wrecked and pillaged during a day-long police and firefighter wildcat strike. Never in his dreams did Drapeau imagine that the poetic lines of the restaurant's namesake foreshadowed its destiny:

She was a massive ship, hewn in gold,
With masts that fingered heaven, on seas unknown.
Under redundant sun, with scattered hair
Was prowed outspread Venus, bare.

But then one night she hit the huge reef
in waters where the Siren sings
and this ghastly shipwreck tilted its keel
to the depths of the chasm, that immutable tomb.⁴

On the morning of 7 October 1969, 2,400 firefighters and 3,700 police officers walked off the job. That evening during a special newscast a CBC anchor prompted his audience to think about “what happens when a metropolis has no policemen, no firemen.” According to him, it had been easy for daytime Montreal to cope with the situation; the trouble started, he told his viewers, as night fell and things spun out of control into what the national public broadcaster called a “night of terror.”⁵ The outcome of the strike was surveyed over the following days: death, injuries, violence, and arrests, plus nine armed bank robberies, thirty other armed robberies, and 494 complaints involving \$853,882 worth of reported damage – including at the Vaisseau d'Or.⁶ To the embarrassment of Montreal's elected officials the so-called Night of Terror was an event – one of a handful in the city's history – that made international front-page

⁴ Émile Nelligan, “Ship of Gold,” in *Ship of Gold: the essential poems of Émile Nelligan*, trans. Marc Di Saverio (Montreal: Signal Editions, 2017), 11.

⁵ “Montreal's ‘night of terror’,” *CBC Television News Special*, 8 October 1969, accessed 13 January 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1707753042>.

⁶ Sancton, *Governing the Island of Montreal*, 109.

news.⁷ Night, darkness, and chaos had given editors the world over a facile imagery with which to play, one that they juxtaposed to law and order that most often reigned during the day.

In 1960s Quebec strikes took place in the private sector as meatpackers, truckers, and factory workers walked off the job, and in the public and para-public sectors as government employees, teachers, and health care workers did the same. Historian Sean Mills has placed 1960s Quebec within a transnational context by showing how, whether peaceful or not-so-peaceful, overlapping strikes and protests made the province's metropolis and its streets the setting for a new political culture.⁸ Indeed, Montreal was one of many cities in the world where the intense confrontations of the 1960s redefined the conditions of women and men and led to an explosion of new political subjects that included students, youths, women, queer, racialized, and postcolonial actors. A clear example of this redefinition happened when students occupied Sir George Williams University's computer centre to protest systemic racism. But like many other challenges to authority during this period, the occupation of the university ended with police sending an anti-riot unit in what would become a violent mass arrest. And because a fire broke out during the bedlam, firefighters also arrived on-scene to allay the heat.⁹ Not only did the event shake the Black community to its core, but it also showed how the Civic Party relied on police and fire departments to crackdown on, or cleanup after, dissent during the 1960s. A few months after the Sir George Williams affair, however, the city's already tense atmosphere was thrown into chaos when those same officers and firefighters elected to go on strike after a breakdown in labour talks.

⁷ The sensational scenes of "roving mobs ... smashing windows with baseball bats, looting stores and setting off blazes" made it on the front-page of *The Jerusalem Post*, *Evening Standard*, *Evening News*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Chicago Tribune*. Gerald Clark, "What Happens When The Police Strike," *New York Times*, 16 November 1969. Also see Alain Médam, *Montréal Interdite* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1978), 107-8.

⁸ Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 104-5.

⁹ See "Days to Remember: The Sir George Williams Narratives," in Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation*, 129-56.

This chapter looks at the period's protest politics by placing police and firefighter strikes at the centre of the narrative. Specifically, it examines three events: the 1969 strike, the creation of an anti-demonstration bylaw in 1969, and a second firefighters' strike in 1974. Collectively, these events reveal a lot about municipal governance and power in Montreal during the 1960s and 1970s. First, they demonstrate how easily the municipal administration's hegemonic structure collapsed without police officers or firefighters. Second, because both police and firefighters assumed roles as custodians of order, their unions held bargaining power that was unmatched when heading into labour talks. And third, when order collapsed Montrealers were pitted against those who tried to reap the benefits of chaos as they tried to save their homes, goods, and livelihoods. In fact, the labour disputes had the most profound and lasting effect on those who were not involved in the negotiating process in any meaningful way. The chapter therefore reveals how city employees made use of the spectre of nighttime anarchy to achieve better working conditions. The night became a tool to negotiate, one that was used by both the municipal administration and city employees. Leading up to the strikes, trade union leaders representing the Montreal Policemen's Brotherhood (MPB) and the Montreal Firemen's Association (MFA) strongly defended their members' cause, but paradoxically, once their members went on strike it was their passivity that generated chaos. Indeed, the wildcat strikes cannot be disentangled from the night because it was the fear (and reality) of nighttime chaos that allowed members to improve their bargaining power and thus gain better settlements. By scrutinizing, not only the centre of municipal power, but the administrative forces operating in the background – like firefighters, police officers, and trade union leaders – we gain new perspectives on municipal governance.¹⁰

¹⁰ Michèle Dagenais and Pierre-Yves Saunier, "Tales from the Periphery: An Outline Survey of Municipal Employees and Services in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *Municipal Services and Employees in the*

Eventually, the sixteen-hour 1969 strike was resolved when the provincial government intervened, which involved the mobilization of the Sûreté du Québec (SQ) and the Canadian army. In the aftermath, and to defuse the city's politically charged atmosphere, the Civic Party enacted an anti-demonstration bylaw, which prohibited assemblies in order "to prevent riots and other violations of order, peace and public safety."¹¹ But because the Civic Party's answer to protest and dissent was so draconian, activists from different factions began seeing elements of totalitarianism in the way that it was governing Montreal. They reacted defiantly by organizing nighttime protests, the most significant of which were the rallies organized by the feminist Front commun des Québécoises (FCQ) in November 1969 and the rally organized by labour leaders in the context of a strike at *La Presse* in October 1971. Without fail, however, the city sent its anti-riot unit to enforce the bylaw, which led to violent clashes and mass arrest. But perhaps the most remarkable aspect of these events had been the way that, in the span of a few weeks, police officers had gone from challenging the powers at City Hall to enforcing a bylaw that prevented residents from doing the same thing. Over the following months and years civil rights activists would challenge the legitimacy of the anti-demonstration bylaw on the streets and in the municipal, provincial, and federal courts.¹² The power of night during this period is revealed in a poignant and gripping way by one of Quebec's most revered authors, Maire-Claire Blais, who dramatized the political atmosphere of the late-1960s and early-1970s in *St. Lawrence Blues* (1973). The novel takes the reader on a picaresque journey through Montreal's streets and

Modern City: New Historic Approaches, eds. Michèle Dagenais, Irene Maver, and Pierre-Yves Saunier (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 16.

¹¹ City of Montreal, By-Law No. 3926, *By-Law relating to exceptional measures to safeguard the free exercise of civil liberties, to regulate the use of the public domain and to prevent riots and other violations of order, peace and public safety* (12 November 1969).

¹² See *Dupond v. City of Montreal et al.* [1978] 2 S.C.R. 770. André Beauvais, "Montréal luttera contre le jugement du juge Gaston Lacroix," *La Presse*, 16 April 1970. Herbert Marx, "The Montreal Anti-Demonstration By-Law - Bad Everywhere," *Manitoba Law Journal*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1971): 347-54.

culminates with a huge demonstration against injustice – what Blais poetically refers to as a “night of justice.”¹³

Another labour conflict would rock Montreal in 1974 when firefighters elected to go on strike again. In the aftermath of the 1969 labour conflict the city offered a generous contract to police officers; in fact, between Drapeau’s first mandate in 1954 and 1970 the Police Department’s funds would increase by 418%.¹⁴ However, this had not been the case for firefighters. Therefore, after a complete breakdown in talks, during which union leaders tried to get the city to index wages to the rate of inflation, firefighters went on strike thus thrusting the city into mayhem once again.¹⁵ This strike lasted for a whole weekend, which allowed vandals and arsonists to roam the streets and destroy properties, homes, and businesses. Indeed, it was another moment when Montrealers were at the mercy of a labour dispute involving the Civic Party and trade unions. The nighttime firestorms would hit Montreal hard and left hundreds of residents destitute, which forced the provincial government to intervene, again. But unlike the mobilization of troops in 1969, this strike was resolved with the provincial government guaranteeing that it would partially pay for the firefighters’ new contract.

From the Night of the Strike to the Night of Terror

*Strikes are prohibited in all circumstances to the police officers and firemen in the employ of a municipal corporation.*¹⁶

– Section 93 of the Quebec Labour Code (1964)

¹³ Marie-Claire Blais, *St. Lawrence Blues*, trans. Ralph Manheim (1973; Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), 157, 195.

¹⁴ Turmel, *Le Service de police de la cité de Montréal (1909-1971)*, 256-7.

¹⁵ For a legal review of the labour dispute see François Dontigny, “L’efficacité du cadre légal particulier de la négociation collective visant les pompiers municipaux québécois : le cas des pompiers de Montréal,” (M.A. thesis (Law), Université de Montréal, 2015).

¹⁶ R. S. Q. 1964, c. 141, s. 93, accessed 7 May, 2020, <http://legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/showdoc/cs/C-27>.

At 5:00 A.M., on Tuesday, 14 December 1943, Montreal's police and fire departments began an eighteen-hour long strike. Alongside many blue-collar workers, the striking officers and firefighters were pursuing their right to unionize. During that strike, a crime spree took hold of Montreal in what newspapers would eventually brand 'La nuit de la grève' [The Night of the Strike]. Vandals, burglars, and arsonists dotted Montreal's wartime landscape with crime scenes, the most important of which was a fire on Chambord Street where striking firefighters stood watching while five Fire Marshals attempted to bring the flames under control.¹⁷ The event forced federal authorities to place seven hundred soldiers from Camp Borden, Ontario on high alert from December 1943 to February 1944. In the end, Mayor Raynault's administration yielded to both departments' demands upon request from Quebec Premier Adélard Godbout.¹⁸ While this episode might seem like a distant and unconnected story, it nevertheless frames the political struggle for power in 1960s Montreal. In fact, the morning after the 1969 strike ended, Quebec Premier Jean-Jacques Bertrand, chair of the Montreal executive committee Lucien Saulnier, and trade union leaders all recalled 1943 and drew parallels between both strikes.¹⁹

In the years leading up to the 1969 strike Montreal chief of police Jean-Paul Gilbert noted a change in tone in the Police Department's labour culture: "We began to see the change in about 1964 [...] Up until that point the police were not like other unions. They had a sense of duty and responsibility toward society."²⁰ But the 1960s was a time of intense confrontation between the old and the new. In Quebec, these contestations mostly took place in Montreal, and because these upheavals created volatility and violence many officers grew cynical about the

¹⁷ "La nuit de la grève marquée de 18 méfaits," *La Presse*, 16 December 1943. "De graves dégâts par les flammes durant la grève," *La Presse*, 15 December 1943.

¹⁸ See Dagenais, *Des pouvoirs et des hommes*, 130-1. Alice Parizeau, "L'armée et la Crise d'octobre," *Criminologie*, vol. 13 no. 2 (1980): 62.

¹⁹ Jean-Jacques Bertrand, *Journal des débats de l'Assemblée nationale*, 8 October 1969, Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée nationale du Québec.

²⁰ McKenna and Purcell, *Drapeau*, 208. Adam, *La démocratie à Montréal*, 118.

changing nature of their work. Although these upheavals transformed the nature of police work, the average officer's workload had remained more or less the same until January 1967. That month the municipal administration enacted three new policies that destabilized the workforce. The first policy instructed the department to have one constable per police car; the second slashed pay grades, which made salaries inferior to Toronto's Police Department; and the third had the city cease its contribution to the Montreal Policemen's Brotherhood (MPB) pension plan. Since labour contracts would expire in 1968 union leaders pushed the municipal administration to hold talks. The latter, however, claimed it was too busy dealing with Expo 67 to begin negotiating contracts, and instead compelled union leaders to wait until the end of the event. This cavalier response was met with anger and frustration, and it quickly dawned on union leaders that they could gain some leverage if they meddled with the event.

City employees started challenging the administration one month before the end of Expo's festivities. This challenge, however, did not come from the Police Department. Rather, it was six thousand employees of the Montreal Transportation Commission (MTC) and taxi drivers who held an impromptu wildcat strike. Further, when Mayor Drapeau and MTC president Lucien L'Allier announced that they would not negotiate labour contracts in 1967, a nighttime riot ensued. On streets, conductors, drivers, inspectors, and attendants displayed their frustration.²¹ Members of the radical taxi faction Comité d'entr'aide embarked on parallel protest as they drove down to City Hall shouting "We want justice!" and "We want to talk to Drapeau!"²² When it became clear that nobody would step outside City Hall to meet with them, taxi activists regrouped and held a spontaneous street protest.²³ But it was the MTC strike, more

²¹ An unsympathetic letter from MTC president Lucien L'Allier unleashed the fury. Jacques Lafrenière, "CTM: une lettre de M. L'Allier a finalement déclenché le conflit," *La Presse*, 21 September 1967.

²² Warren, *Histoire du taxi à Montréal*, 191-2.

²³ By the following year members of the Comité d'entr'aide joined the Mouvement de libération du taxi (MLT), a more militant and radical group. *Ibid.*, 194, 205.

so than taxi activists, that made life difficult for Montrealers and Expo tourists alike, as it brought Montreal's bus lines and its sparkling new metro system to a halt. The MTC strike paralyzed the rhythm of the city for several days. Some encumbered citizens coped with the lack of public transit by carpooling with neighbours or walking to work despite the autumn rains. City activities had been disrupted by the labour movement and Jean Drapeau made the extraordinary claim that it was "truly criminal [...] some people will die and others will have their lives cut short [because of it]."²⁴ It was not until Quebec Premier Daniel Johnson stepped in and signed a highly contested back-to-work order in mid-October 1967 that the transit strike ended. The strike had been a worrisome episode for Mayor Drapeau because it showed how much of his power rested upon the strength and obedience of the city's essential services.

Incidentally, it was the financial strain created by Expo 67 that generated tension between the cash-strapped municipal administration and city employees. In 1968, a year when labour contracts would be renegotiated, the administration announced its first budget crisis: a deficit of \$28 million.²⁵ Labour unions expected the administration to increase cuts, and as those representing transit employees and police officers knew, this could have profound consequences on their members' livelihoods. On 23 February 1968 1,500 police officers walked to City Hall to remind the municipal administration that they stood against cuts. Once the officers reached the building they pounded on the walls and on the windows, and they hurled insults and threats at the men nestled inside, which included Jean Drapeau, the chief of police Jean-Paul Gilbert, and chair of the executive committee Lucien Saulnier. The officers were embittered and felt that their new contract should mirror the role that they played as custodians of law and order in a

²⁴ "Saulnier : négociations dès le retour au travail," *Le Devoir*, 18 October 1967.

²⁵ To offset losses Drapeau announced a lottery scheme designed to attract participants from all across Canada and the United States. Optimistically, he forecasted that it would generate an additional \$32 million a year. See Morton, *At Odds*, 189. "Drapeau recourt à la taxe 'volontaire': Une loterie municipale en mai," *La Presse*, 3 April 1968.

climate of social unrest. “Suddenly it was the police who were in the streets,” remarked Jean Drapeau’s biographers, “engulfed in all the classic passions of a mob.” Later, Chief Gilbert disclosed that it had been the single most frightening night of his career: “I will never forget that night as long as I live. I was scared, I can tell you. The mayor, Saulnier – we were all scared. I can still hear the echo of the pounding. And their chant: ‘Dra-peau au po-teau!’ [Drapeau to the gallows!] over and over. I had the impression of a bad dream, of a *coup d’état*.” Petrified by the possible outcome, he also recalled how the officers had nearly brought down the municipal administration.²⁶ Although Drapeau, Saulnier, and Gilbert were not unaccustomed to protests, this marked the first time that they were exposed to potential violence. Eventually, the mayor gathered courage and walked up to the mob in an attempt to calm the officers’ spirits. He anguished over the scene and asked them to consider the optics of dissenting police, but his plea inspired no shame.²⁷

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter the streets of Montreal were the crucible of a revolutionary political culture, which sometimes led to violent confrontations. One of the era’s most violent and important incidents took place in 1968 when inexperienced police officers cracked down on Saint-Jean-Baptiste revellers, which left over one hundred women and men injured. In the leadup to the event a stage had been erected in front of the municipal library on Sherbrooke Street to give VIP guests – notably Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Mayor Jean Drapeau – a prime view of the annual Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day parade. However, when the parade started – and because officers sensed that a confrontation might arise – they began arresting activists associated to the Quebec sovereignty movement who had gathered for the festivities. In retaliation, the crowd pelted officers with rocks, threw projectiles toward the stage, and chanted

²⁶ Two weeks later, a visibly fatigued and shook Saulnier checked himself into the hospital suffering from depression. McKenna and Purcell, *Drapeau*, 206-7.

²⁷ Lucien Rivard, “1,500 policiers manifestent à l’hôtel de ville,” *La Presse*, 24 February 1968.

“Tru-deau au po-teau!” [Trudeau to the gallows!]. Officers quickly manoeuvred and the riotous crowd moved across the street into La Fontaine Park where the festivities were thrown into complete disarray. Bystanders, people nestled in nearby nightclubs, cafés, and private residences all suffered the merciless wrath of nightstick wielding officers. The officers crushed young and old and took close to three hundred into custody during what became known as the infamous and bloody Lundi de la matraque [Nightstick Monday].²⁸ The short documentary film *Taire des hommes* (a clever wordplay that taunts autocratic administrators riding on Expo 67’s coattails) shows vivid images of the bedlam, and its final scene shows Jean Drapeau riding in a black sedan as Jacques Couture – renowned priest, activist, and future leader of the opposition at City Hall – himself a victim of police brutality that night, reflects on Montreal’s political climate:

If our society accepts outcomes like this, we're screwed. Even with great achievements like Expo, the Métro, Place des Arts, when people are unjustly attacked, flogged, and disrespected in holding cells [...] well I find it very serious. It's a sign that our society is really sick and if we're not addressing this problem, well then, I believe it's hopeless. We may need more comprehensive solutions.²⁹

The following day, as parade attendees were still in holding cells or nursing wounds, Canadians went to the polls and elected Trudeau as the head of the first majority government in a decade.

Nightstick Monday was a pivotal moment because it convinced the Police Department to train officers to prevent similar events from happening again. In its aftermath the department created an anti-riot unit that would be equipped with protective shields, three-foot-long clubs, special face guards, and, later, tear gas in order to appropriately face large and volatile crowds.³⁰

The department had observed how anti-riot tactics and equipment had helped officers in cities

²⁸ Marc Ouimet, “Le lys en fête, le lys en feu : La Saint-Jean-Baptiste au Québec de 1960 à 1990,” (M.A. thesis (History), Université du Québec à Montréal, 2011), 101-3. Jacques Lanctôt later revealed that Nightstick Monday had a direct impact on the political kidnappings of 1970. See Pierre Turgeon, “J’étais un Robin des Bois [entrevue avec Jacques Lanctôt],” *Liberté*, vol. 32, no. 5 (1990): 109.

²⁹ Pascal Gélinas and Pierre Harel (dirs.), *Taire des hommes* (Montreal: N/A, 1968).

³⁰ “Escouade anti-émeutes forte de 450 policiers à Montréal,” *La Presse*, 3 July 1968. “Pas de gaz Mace ‘pour le moment’,” *La Presse*, 8 October 1968. Joseph Hanafin, “Anti-riot squad planned for city,” *Montreal Star*, 3 July 1968.

like Los Angeles and New York and it felt confident that Montreal would benefit from the services of a similar tactical unit. The experiences of other urban centres offered both warnings and examples to follow as the department worked out its future. In fact, in the 1968 atmosphere of rebellion, in which strikes and riots broke out in places as diverse as Paris, Mexico City, Prague, and Tokyo, the president of the MPB coolly stated that any future clashes between Montreal's new anti-riot unit and protestors would leave "bodies in the streets."³¹ By early-1969 the anti-riot unit had been on-site and praised for its decisive action during the Sir George Williams University affair and the Opération McGill demonstration.³² The squad's role was to prevent and suppress any type of public protest that could paralyse the flow of the city. And it played that role particularly well according to a senior observer from the Toronto Police Department claimed, after having studied several American anti-riot units in action, that "none compare[d] with Montreal's for deftness and effectiveness."³³

Montreal police and fire departments upheld law and order with diligence until their labour contracts expired on 30 November 1968, which marked the beginning of a year-long and arduous negotiating process.³⁴ The first order of business for the union leaders representing the MPB and the MFA was achieving salary parity with the police and fire departments of metropolitan Toronto. The unions based this on the fact that Montreal's atmosphere of protest made jobs demonstrably more difficult than any Canadian city.³⁵ Cash-strapped Montreal, however, argued otherwise. Furthermore, at this point the city was on the cusp of a general

³¹ "City soon to form 180-man riot squad," *Montreal Gazette*, 24 August 1968. For more on 1968 see Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

³² See Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation*. Jean-Philippe Warren, "L'Opération McGill français. Une page méconnue de l'histoire de la gauche nationaliste," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* vol. 16, no. 2 (Winter 2008): 97-115.

³³ Gerald Clark, "What Happens When The Police Strike," *New York Times*, 16 November 1969. J.-C. Fortin, "La police: les émeutiers, on les attend!," *Le Petit Journal*, 9 September 1968.

³⁴ Resolution No. 30487/1-2, minutes of the executive committee, 23 October 1968, VM074-6-D075, AVM.

³⁵ Between June 1968 and October 1969 two officers on duty had been killed and more than 250 injured. Sancton, *Governing the Island of Montreal*, 108.

strike because elected officials had voted to withhold pension plans from blue-collar and white-collar employees. Looking for ways to reduce a deficit swollen by years of big spending, the municipal administration froze city contributions to pension funds, promising to pay the money at some future date. But with a massive strike looming, the city backtracked and released the funds.³⁶ With negotiations running into a dead-end in January 1969 the MPB filed for arbitration, and the MFA did the same less than a month later. However, both unions would have to wait several months before hearing a verdict from the arbitration tribunal. Finally, on the night of 2 October 1969 the unions received the verdict from the tribunal, which vindicated the city's position and maintained that salaries would be kept inferior to demands. From the MFA's standpoint this outcome had been predictable because the presiding justice on its tribunal had worked for Drapeau and Saulnier as the Montreal Personnel Director, which was a clear conflict of interest according to the union.³⁷ The following morning union leaders met. MFA leader André Plante stated that he sensed that the worst was about to happen after the judge's "rotten" verdict, which is why his union and the MPB appealed the decision.³⁸ The issue remained in limbo for several days.

Less than a month after it had opened, the mayor's Vaisseau d'Or had become a gathering site, not only for Montreal's elite, but for activists and protestors too. Everyone knew that the mayor spent evenings in a makeshift office upstairs where he could see – from a bird's-eye view – how clients were treated. Inside the chic restaurant, for which he had signed a ten-year lease, Drapeau hoped to meet with and make a profit from wealthy Montrealers. In a very real sense the divide between his office at City Hall and the one in his restaurant was muddled.

³⁶ Jacques Lafrenière, "Grève Générale des 18,000 employés municipaux," *La Presse*, 14 January 1969.

³⁷ Claude Masson and Jean-Paul Charbonneau, "Pourquoi les pompiers sont-ils, eux aussi, entrés dans la ronde de la contestation?," *La Presse*, 7 October 1969.

³⁸ Jean-Paul Charbonneau, "Murmures de grèves chez pompiers et policiers," *La Presse*, 4 October 1969. "Police, fire pay raises 'not enough'," *Montreal Gazette*, 3 October 1969.

For instance, the Civic Party would make tourism a central component of its electoral platform in 1970. And the following year, during a television interview, Drapeau revealed that the Vaisseau d'Or had been opened "to attract a clientele – made up of fifty percent tourists."³⁹ Montrealers recognized this conflict of interest and that is why groups began staging protests as soon as it opened. Those whom Malcolm Reid calls the "shouting signpainters" were likely audible over the orchestra's music; or, if they were not, they certainly gave the restaurant's patrons an unwelcoming salute by lingering outside, shouting slogans, and holding placards and posters.⁴⁰ But things were more cumbersome for the mayor when protestors were essential service workers because they had a few more tools at their disposal. For instance, following a rowdy assembly on Saturday, 4 October 1969, 1,200 firefighters marched from their meeting hall on the corner of Saint-Laurent Boulevard and Des Pins Avenue to Dominion Square. On their way, they spontaneously stopped at the restaurant where they chanted "We want Drapeau!"⁴¹ These protests rattled the establishment's owner who claimed that "[i]f people keep targeting the Vaisseau d'Or I'll go bankrupt. I don't want to go bankrupt!"⁴² Indeed, the firefighters recognized that it was impossible to disentangle city politics from the Vaisseau d'Or. Driving through the city's streets in firetrucks, they would often pull-up in front of the restaurant. Inside, the orchestra paused while the firefighters, feigning an emergency, arrived in protective gear to inspect the exits, the kitchen, and smoke detectors. Meanwhile, outside, the trucks' red lights bounced off the neighbouring windows while sirens wailed into the night.⁴³

Despite civic protests and unproductive meetings with the municipal administration, negotiations remained stagnant for almost a year. On the eve of the result of the MPB and MFA

³⁹ The interview aired on 13 November 1971. Quoted in Adam, *La démocratie à Montréal*, 268.

⁴⁰ Malcolm Reid, *The Shouting Signpainters: A Literary and Political Account of Quebec Revolutionary Nationalism* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1972).

⁴¹ "On veut Drapeau!" criaient les pompiers," *La Presse*, 6 October 1969.

⁴² Lise Lapierre, "D'après Monsieur le Maire Aucun danger au Vaisseau d'Or," *Photo-journal*, 8-15 October 1969.

⁴³ McKenna and Purcell, *Drapeau*, 191.

appeals, on 6 October, Chief Gilbert met with leading police officers and chief inspectors. He reported to City Hall that he did not “feel” like a strike was in play.

That Day

That Tuesday was an unusually beautiful, clear, and crisp autumn morning in Montreal. The weather on 7 October 1969 at 7:00 A.M., when Jean-Paul Gilbert and Lucien Saulnier were sitting at their offices, was, by all accounts, perfect. The men might have sensed, however, that a metaphorical storm was brewing when they received copies of the decision rendered by the appeal tribunal. It offered police officers with five years’ experience a salary increase that was still several hundred dollars inferior to the paygrade offered by the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force. Salary parity between Montreal and Toronto police departments had long been in place, but the arbitration tribunal decided that MPB salaries would remain inferior. Therefore, as early as 7:30 A.M. officers started clearing out of police stations to make their way to the Paul Sauvé Arena for a general assembly, where union leaders would discuss the “distasteful” and “rotten” deal they had received from the appeal tribunal. By the end of the morning, when no headway was made between the city and the MPB, Canada’s largest police force walked off the job. If the wildcat strike displeased the municipal administration, an informal street vox pop by *La Presse* showed that most Montrealers sympathized with the strikers. Taxi drivers, students, mothers, and bankers all held positive opinions of a strike, although this favourable attitude would not last for long.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, at 10:30 A.M., the firefighters’ association received the verdict on its appeal. Frustrated by its result, the union opted for a wildcat strike as well, and members of the MFA joined those of the MPB at the Paul Sauvé Arena. Taken together, there were nearly six thousand police officers and firefighters on strike. By lunchtime, as the crowd swelled, MFA

⁴⁴ “Malgré leur inquiétude, les Montréalais appuient les revendications des policiers,” *La Presse*, 8 October, 1969.

president André Plante alerted Lucien Saulnier via a wired message that the atmosphere at the arena was getting rowdy and out of hand (fig. 8).⁴⁵



Figure 8: *Young and energized, the striking police officers and firefighters cheer during an assembly at the Paul Sauvé Arena. Gravel et al. "7 octobre 1969," 7 October 1969, P833, S5, D1696-0707-004, Fonds La Presse, BAnQ.*

Upon receiving this news, and sensing a potential for unrest, Saulnier publicly begged Montrealers to find a safe hideout and, most importantly, to cooperate: “The citizens must not panic; they must think of their security and of their belongings in the greatest possible measure and I advise all go back home after their work and be calm and vigilant.”⁴⁶ Saulnier, a Montreal businessman, city councillor from 1954 to 1972, and chair of the Montreal Executive Committee from 1960 to 1970, would be at the centre of the day’s events. As calamity fell upon Montreal, Drapeau was nowhere in sight; he was neither at his City Hall office nor at the one in his restaurant. In fact, he not in the country but on an economic promotion trip along the

⁴⁵ Grèves: Pompiers – 1969, VM074-3-D085, AVM.

⁴⁶ Lucien Saulnier, 7 October 1969. Grèves: Policiers – 1969, VM074-3-D086, AVM.

Mississippi River taking part in a Canadian trade show.⁴⁷ Later, when he received news that rampant violence was spreading across the city, he boarded a northbound flight and, upon landing at the Dorval airport much later that night, he joined Saulnier at City Hall. According to one journalist, Mayor Drapeau was pale white, had tears in his eyes, and appeared unable to talk for the first time since he started his public life.⁴⁸ Unsettled, he remained in Saulnier's office until the events dwindled at 2:00 A.M. But before all of this took place, Saulnier did what he could in Drapeau's absence, assuming leadership with confidence. That afternoon, he made his way to the Paul Sauvé arena where, upon arriving, he was instantly jeered by a sizable share of the city's essential services workforce. Unchaperoned, he spoke for several minutes about safety, order, and law, but brought limited insight to the men who usually safeguarded the city and who simply wanted to hear about competitive salaries and better labour conditions. By the time he returned to City Hall, he had a good sense of the volatile mood in the city.⁴⁹ While he would later state that he did not sense any immediate danger, he did sense that communications might breakdown, which is why he phoned provincial authorities at once to request army troops in Montreal. However, the provincial government declined this initial request and sent five hundred Sûreté du Québec officers to Montreal instead – and it made sure that another three hundred were en route. Alas the officers coming from as far as Rouyn-Noranda and Sept-Îles were underinformed about the city and its geography, and the protection they could offer was limited at best.⁵⁰ In the meantime, the strikers idled at the arena and spent most of the day playing cards, chatting, drinking, and eating until much later that night.

⁴⁷ It included stops in Missouri and Louisiana. "Unifoliés géants à St. Louis, USA," *La Presse*, 6 October 1969.

⁴⁸ "Québec a été pris au dépourvu et dépassé par les événements," *La Presse*, 8 October 1969.

⁴⁹ "Le Parti civique a vécu ses moments les plus tragiques depuis 1960," *La Presse*, 8 October 1969.

⁵⁰ A folder at the City of Montreal archives is filled with letters praising his coolness and bravery. He received letters from citizens, scholars, bankers, religious leaders, politicians, and many others, including telegraphs from the leader of the opposition. Grèves: Policiers – 1969, VM074-3-D086, AVM.

⁵⁰ "Montréal en otage: policiers et pompiers font la grève," *Tout le monde en parlait*, 2007, accessed 24 April 2020, <https://curio.ca/fr/video/montreal-en-otage-policiers-et-pompiers-font-la-greve-4134/>.

That Night

Then came the night. News articles reported that in the morning, people had dismissed traffic laws; in the afternoon, there had been nearly a dozen heists; and – as had been the case during the 1943 Night of the Strike – nighttime gave way to complete chaos. Several times throughout the night the SQ received phone-calls alerting them of violent riots (fig. 9). Immediately, they dispatched an anti-riot squad that, upon arriving to the scene, discovered empty streets. Meanwhile, the pranksters reaped the benefits of unpatrolled streets elsewhere. At one point, in the centre of the action – at the intersection of Metcalfe and Sainte-Catherine streets – a marauding gang took control of an SQ cruiser. They were able to pull the officers out of the car and beat them violently, enucleating one officer’s eye and breaking the other’s arm.⁵¹

The day’s fast development was noticed by those in power. President of the MPB Guy Marcil glorified the “thin blue line” that separates society from chaos and anarchy, and by leaving the city unprotected police demonstrated its value.⁵² With the lack of a capable police force, it was a battalion of 110 soldiers of the 22nd Regiment – called into action by Quebec Justice Minister Rémi Paul after he realized the extent of the chaos – that provided some limited protection.⁵³ While some saw the strike as a moment filled with danger, for others the day without police felt more like a moment of liberation. “The crowd, both the demonstrators and those who were watching,” explained famous Quebec writer and sociologist Marcel Rioux, “seemed to feel a certain liberation, a certain country-fair mood.”⁵⁴ Rioux had wandered downtown, around Sainte-Catherine Street, and though he saw lawlessness he was struck by the

⁵¹ “Deux policiers battus par des voyous,” *La Presse*, 8 October 1969.

⁵² Gerald Clark, “What Happens When The Police Strike,” *New York Times*, 16 November 1969.

⁵³ Pierre Vennat, “L’armée est à Montréal : Québec mate la police,” *La Presse*, 8 October 1969.

⁵⁴ Jay Walz, “Montreal: It Was Unbelievable: a Big City Without Police or Firemen,” *New York Times*, 12 October 1969.

prevalence of mass jubilation. What made the development so spectacular was not simply the prosaic exploitation of the city's lawlessness by mobs of looters and vandals – although that certainly helped many dailies sell copies over the following days – but rather, the multiplicity of nighttime contestation: how private groups, political grievances, and labour disputes all intertwined on city streets.



Figure 9: An anti-riot squad of the Sûreté du Québec attempts to disperse a crowd on Peel Street. Gravel et al. "7 octobre 1969," 7 October 1969, P833, S5, D1696-0707-087, Fonds La Presse, BANQ.

Like any other weeknight, Montrealers gallivanted from store to store in the city's downtown core. But on that Tuesday night, men and women who otherwise were alienated by consumer society saw the windows along Sainte-Catherine Street in a new light and congregated for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to obtain luxurious goods.⁵⁵ Indeed, an astounding contrast laid before onlookers who saw neighbours and colleagues carrying ultramodern electronic

⁵⁵ By 1900, and for sixty years, Sainte-Catherine Street was "well established as *the* retail shopping street of Montreal." See Elizabeth Sifton, "Montreal's Fashion Mile: St. Catherine Street, 1890-1930," in *Fashion: A Canadian Perspective*, ed. Alexandra Palmer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 203-26. Linteau, *Sainte-Catherine Street*, 9-10.

equipment and haute couture items in a frenzy of pillaging and arson. The bright neon lights of department stores oriented those who, caught in the hysteria, made their way through Sainte-Catherine Street's shopping area: "Jewelry stores, clothing stores, electrical appliance shops – and anything that stood in the path of the mob were hit after nightfall. [...] Fur coats, electric razors, skis and hundreds of small items from dozens of jewelry stores were stolen by laughing bearded youths."⁵⁶ The fact that looters mostly targeted sites of affluence – as opposed to, say, pharmacies or hardware stores – shows that people were looking for expensive goods and for things they otherwise could not afford. And, as in many other instances of mass looting, the culprits seldom distinguished between chain stores or independent businesses, locally or foreign owned. Historian David E. Nye, in his research on the history of blackouts, describes the collective hysteria and social pressure to "dig in" when law and order collapse as a "break in the flow of social time."⁵⁷ Although Montrealers did not experience a blackout during the Night of Terror, the event had (like a blackout) disrupted the city's flow of social time and for that brief moment Montrealers "dug in."

Earlier that evening a procession of seventy-six taxis made its way to City Hall. The group of cabbies and political allies known as the Mouvement de Libération du Taxi (MLT) met, as they did on every Tuesday, to organize labour justice for taxi drivers. The location of their meetings, in the school yard of l'École des Beaux Arts, was a critical centre of political engagement and cultural mobilization that permitted the intermixing of different people, notably students, radical activists, and social animators. In the months leading up to the night of the police and firefighters' strike, the MLT had been particularly frustrated with the Murray Hill Limousine company's monopoly of taxi services at the Dorval airport, a contract that had been

⁵⁶ "Laughing hoods move in," *Montreal Gazette*, 8 October 1969.

⁵⁷ Nye, *When the Lights Went Out*, 3, 124-5.

given to affluent English-speaking businessowner Charles Hershorn. This frustration was compounded by the fact that Murray Hill also held the exclusive right to park at stands at some of the city's most luxurious hotels: the Ritz-Carlton, the Sheraton-Mount Royal, and the Windsor. According to reporter Nick Auf de Maur, the battle between the MLT and Hershorn had become "a rallying point for left-wing activists. It was ideal, a microcosm of everything wrong in Quebec."⁵⁸ And as sociologist Jean-Philippe Warren notes, although all three levels of governments could be blamed for the structure of Montreal's taxi industry, it was Jean Drapeau and the Civic Party that endured most of the protests. "MURRAY HILL AND JEAN DRAPEAU ARE INFURIATING US – LET'S INFURIATE THEM," they clamoured.⁵⁹ And like essential service workers, the MLT had been trying to get a hearing with Civic Party members for a year. However, on that Tuesday, after Lucien Saulnier had dismissed yet another request for an audience, the MLT decided that the time to act had come.

At first an MLT procession caused disruption by lapping City Hall, slowing the flow of traffic, and honking incessantly. Although noisy, the motorcade was orderly and peaceful up to this point. After its second lap around City Hall, however, it made its way toward the second of three targets that evening, the Murray Hill garage located at 1380 Barré Street in Griffintown. The well-documented violence started when the convoy reached the garage. The MLT and its allies trashed Murray Hill's property and destroyed four buses by "showering" them with Molotov cocktails. "Many felt – and did not hide from the fact that the city and the night belonged to them," wrote a columnist about the event.⁶⁰ As the violent protest was underway an SQ van carrying eight officers and a Fire Department car carrying a handful of firefighters

⁵⁸ Nick Auf de Maur, "Lessons on Fighting City Hall: A Study of Montreal's 'Mouvement de Libération du Taxi,'" *The Last Post* vol. 1, no. 3 (April 1970): 20-3.

⁵⁹ Warren, *Histoire du taxi à Montréal*, 201.

⁶⁰ Michel Roy, "Une fusillade fait 3 morts devant la Murray Hill," *Le Devoir*, 8 October 1969.

arrived on site.⁶¹ “You’re strikers too, don’t get mixed up in this, forget Murray!” one individual told the cadre of firefighters. The firefighters stood back and reached an entente cordiale with the protesters by informing them that their goal was to save lives and nearby properties, but not the Murray Hill garage itself. Shortly thereafter someone carrying a rifle shot every artificial light, which plunged the area into darkness. According to a journalist the aural environment was absolutely surreal at this point: “Rock music from portable radios and screaming newscasts from several stations were mixed with the sounds of exploding fire bombs and shotgun and rifle fire.”⁶² Only the natural light of the flames from the Molotov cocktails remained. It was then that an employee of Murray Hill, a security guard, shot at the crowd, wounding twelve and killing an undercover SQ officer, thirty-three-year-old Robert Dumas, who had infiltrated the MLT. Later, in the aftermath of the tragedy, both federal and provincial governments looked into the issues that made Montreal’s taxi industry complex and contested. And while institutional change came years later (when Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa created a new provincial control board), the drastic conclusion of the confrontation at Murray Hill left the property covered in ash.⁶³ And with injured bodies covering the area journalists claimed that it looked like a warzone. But after being shot at the crowd dispersed, and then made its way toward its third target of the evening – the capitalist landmarks in the heart of the city.

The final denouement on 7 October sent a clear message. Joining looters and vandals, protestors also began stealing from stores and businesses. During the pillaging, parts of the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, Sheraton-Mount Royal Hotel, United States Consulate, IBM office, and

⁶¹ Warren, *Histoire du taxi à Montréal*, 208.

⁶² “Murray Hill lot a ‘war zone’,” *Montreal Gazette*, 8 October 1969. J.A. Frank, “The ‘Ingredients’ in Violent Labour Conflict: Patterns in Four Case Studies,” *Labour / Le Travail* 12 (Fall 1983): 91. “Murray Hill dévastée,” *La Presse*, 8 October 1969. Ray Doucet, “Two guns used at Murray Hill,” *Montreal Gazette*, 13 November 1969.

⁶³ As Warren notes, Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa – whose electoral district held the highest concentration of taxi drivers in Canada – acted on the Alfred Bossé Report (1970). Warren, *Histoire du taxi à Montréal*, 208-11.

McGill University were destroyed.⁶⁴ But like Polaris, Mayor Drapeau's Vaisseau d'Or at the Windsor Hotel seemingly guided those who had waited for a night like this one. Once the crowd reached the establishment it made its way inside and completely upended its interior, from the vestibule to the kitchen, and from the dining space to the stage. By the end of the night, amidst the shattered glass, broken chairs and kitchen equipment, the bust of Émile Nelligan remained untouched. It was the only thing to ride out the Vaisseau's wreck.⁶⁵ Thirty years later, the restaurant's cashier would proudly tell *La Presse* that, despite complete lawlessness she had rescued all \$10,000 from the till and hand-delivered it to Jean Drapeau at City Hall the following day.⁶⁶

At this point there was a very real possibility that the conflict could expand and destabilize other parts of the province. As the scale of disorder was dangerously intensifying in Montreal, elected leaders, notably Justice Minister Rémi Paul, began elaborating a plan that would end the strike. At 10:00 P.M. the provincial government met during an extraordinary session at the provincial legislature in Quebec City.⁶⁷ Jean-Jacques Bertrand's Union nationale government unanimously passed a special law that resembled the back-to-work order passed during the 1967 MTC strike. The legislation laid out heavy fines, loss of accreditation as a trade union, and risk of imprisonment if members did not resume their duties by midnight. Premier Bertrand gave insight into the government's decision during the second reading of the Bill:

I hope that firefighters and police officers realize the seriousness of their action, that they realize they've failed to uphold their responsibilities, which is uncharacteristic of them, and I once again urge them to obey [the law] before this one is passed.

⁶⁴ Nick Auf der Maur, *Quebec: A Chronicle 1968-1972; A Last post Special* (Toronto: James Lewis & Samuel, 1972), 15. McKenna and Purcell, *Drapeau*, 214.

⁶⁵ "... On se serait cru un soir de magasinage," *La Presse*, 8 October 1969. "L'activité était toute dans les rues..." *La Presse*, 8 October 1969. "C'était soirée d'aubaines hier sur Sainte-Catherine," *La Presse*, 8 October 1969.

⁶⁶ Christiane Desjardins, "'Tenez M. le maire, ces 10 000\$ sont à vous'," *La Presse*, 16 August 1999.

⁶⁷ Gérard Lebel (président), *Journal des débats de l'Assemblée nationale*, 8 October 1969, Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée nationale du Québec.

This law is based on the principle that the State has duties to fulfil for the common good. When laws are broken, when authority is challenged, when a climate of anarchy and chaos is created, the State has no right to fail in its responsibilities, the State must act, the State acts.⁶⁸

Indeed, the province had been forced to intervene during a labour conflict involving Montreal's municipal administration. With the back-to-work order passed, a battalion of the 22nd Regiment that had arrived remained garrisoned on the city's outskirts in Saint-Hubert. The military personnel would remain in the area and patrol Montreal until 13 October. In the end, this military operation involved 587 personnel, cost taxpayers \$11,333.45, and, perhaps most importantly, served as a dress rehearsal for the following year's October Crisis.⁶⁹

At 11:00 P.M. MFA president André Plante ordered his members back to work.⁷⁰

Twenty minutes after midnight MPB president Guy Marcil did the same when he read the back-to-work order to the officers at the Paul Sauvé Arena. One traffic officer later stated that it was not the fear of impending fines or imprisonment that brought them back to work but rather, the sheer violence that unfolded before their eyes that night.⁷¹ By 12:30 A.M. employees of the fire and police departments had return to their stations and, as one reporter put it, "Montrealers were once again protected, after a few hours of complete anarchy."⁷² In the darkness of night, the disciplinary power of the state had been temporarily removed, and as the sense of community broke down the fractures of society became clear. On a night when most Montrealers had

⁶⁸ Jean-Jacques Bertrand, *Journal des débats de l'Assemblée nationale*, 7 October 1969, Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée nationale du Québec.

⁶⁹ According to a report, the military personnel used knowledge from this first mission for Operation Essay, the Canadian Forces' code name for the October Crisis mission. See Sébastien Campeau, "L'intervention militaire en octobre 1970 et la loi sur les mesures de guerre: modalités et réactions," (M.A. thesis (History), Université du Québec à Montréal, 2009), 29. "Me Rémi Paul demande l'assistance de l'armée canadienne," *La Presse*, 8 October 1969. Parizeau, "L'armée et la Crise d'octobre," 62. Also see Lucien Saulnier's testimony to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films, and Assistance to the Arts, 27-8 November 1969 quoted in Guy Bouthillier and Édouard Cloutier eds., *Trudeau's Darkest Hour: War Measures in Time of Peace, October 1970* (Montreal: Baraka Books, 2010), 53-4.

⁷⁰ André Plante telegraph to Lucien Saulnier at 9:44AM 8 October 1969. Grèves: Pompiers – 1969, VM074-3-D085, AVM.

⁷¹ Jay Walz, "Montreal: It Was Unbelievable: a Big City Without Police or Firemen," *New York Times*, 12 October 1969.

⁷² "Policiers et pompiers reprennent le travail," *La Presse*, 8 October 1969.

barricaded themselves in their home, thousands had contributed to the rebellion, violence, pillage, and protest.

The extent to which the police and fire departments had been able to outmanoeuvre the municipal administration became clear a few weeks after the Night of Terror. Indeed, with very little public opposition, the police and fire department unions signed a new contract on 29 October – as I explain below that day would be remembered not because of this “truce” but for a huge nighttime protest.⁷³ The contract awarded to the police department represented a significant salary increase; the city bumped the department’s share of the city budget from about 8.6% in 1968-1969 to 11.2% in 1970-1971.⁷⁴ The city boosted first-class constable’s salaries to \$8,750 – \$270 above what the arbitration tribunal had offered. Taking into account fringe benefits it was effective parity with officers in metropolitan Toronto. The strike had shown the fragile nature of the city’s authority over its own essential services. And as political scientist Andrew Sancton remarks Montreal simply could not afford to pay competitive salaries, even to its most essential employees, due to over expenditures related to Expo 67.⁷⁵ Because of this the city was much more reticent to throw funds at the Fire Department. Tellingly, this perennial dialectic between the Civic Party and the MFA would cause incredible damage five years later during the infamous Red Weekend when contract negotiations with the firefighters turned sour. In the meantime, Drapeau orchestrated the city’s return to normalcy and cleaned what remained of his restaurant.

Bylaw 3926 to P-6: Restriction on the Freedom of Assembly

⁷³ See photo of the union leaders and the executive committee signing the contracts. Paul-Henri Talbot, “29 octobre 1969,” 29 October 1969, P833, S5, D1696-0769-004, Fonds La Presse, BAnQ.

⁷⁴ “De l’exercice financier 1954/55 à celui de 1970/71, le budget du Service de police passe de 9,6 millions à 49,7 millions de dollars, alors que le total des dépenses municipales passe de 116,5 à 444,7 millions de dollars.” Turmel, *Le Service de police de la cité de Montréal (1909-1971)*, 256-7.

⁷⁵ Sancton, *Governing the Island of Montreal*, 111.

As the daily *La Patrie* would later underline, the destructive nature of the Night of Terror had a profound effect on the relationship between the municipal administration and oppositional movements because it led directly to the enactment of a highly controversial anti-demonstration bylaw.⁷⁶ But before the Civic Party adopted this bylaw a huge protest over language policy took over the streets of Montreal.

During the late-1960s demands had been mounting for a provincial language policy, one that would explicitly address whether immigrant parents could have the right to send their children to English-language school. Many francophone Quebecers viewed this as a problem because if immigrants continued sending their children to English schools, then they would be integrating into the language and culture of the dominant power. On 10 September 1969 tensions boiled over when a pro-francophone group staged a protest in the neighbourhood of Saint-Leonard, which had a large concentration of Italian Montrealers. This protest led to violent confrontations and caused considerable property damage.⁷⁷ After that riot the Quebec government introduced Bill 63, “An Act to promote the French language in Quebec,” which fell short of meeting the demands of pro-francophone advocates because it did not compel parents to send their children to French-language schools. It was amidst this tense atmosphere that a massive protest took shape, organized by a coalition of workers’ and citizens’ committees. On the evening of 29 October 25,000 demonstrators gathered at four different rallying points and by nightfall the groups had merged into a peaceful and jovial procession. The procession’s more militant participants, however, stopped at Square Victoria to light a bonfire and to burn effigies

⁷⁶ “La petite histoire du règlement 3926,” *La Patrie*, 3 November 1971.

⁷⁷ See Chapter 4 in Marc V. Levine, *The Reconquest of Montréal: Language Policy and Social Change in a Bilingual City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990). Sancton, *Governing the Island of Montreal*, 76-8.

of politicians (fig. 10). Later, when they reached La Fontaine Park, they burned several other effigies under the watchful eye of police.⁷⁸ By 11:00 P.M. most protestors had returned home.



Figure 10: A protestor douses a heap of effigies with fuel before setting it ablaze. Atop is the effigy of Lucien Saulnier who – as the symbolism of Nazi swastika suggests – was seen as an authoritarian figurehead. Pierre McCann, “29 octobre 1969,” 29 October 1969, P833, S5, D1969-0768-015, Fonds La Presse, BAnQ.

The protest’s considerable size and its violent message moved Lucien Saulnier to phone the city’s legal team and ask it to create a bylaw that would put an end to disorderly behaviour. To put it another way, he wanted the legal team to conceive a solution that would cease political unrest, especially since there were growing reports that “subversive activities” menaced civil liberties.⁷⁹ In the end the city’s legal team drafted the *By-Law relating to exceptional measures to safeguard the free exercise of civil liberties, to regulate the use of the public domain and to*

⁷⁸ The crowd burned effigies of Mayor Drapeau, Lucien Saulnier, Premier Jean-Jacques Bertrand, and Justice Minister Rémi Paul. “Une mer de manifestants déferle rue Craig,” *Le Devoir*, 30 October 1969. Mills, *The Empire Within*, 156-7.

⁷⁹ “Press conference given by the chairman of the executive committee of the city of Montreal, Mr. Lucien Saulnier, in the executive committee chamber, at 18.00 hours, Saturday, the 11th of October 1969.” Grèves: Policiers – 1969, VM074-3-D086, AVM.

prevent riots and other violations of order, peace and public safety. Whereas the Civic Party believed that the bylaw would restore order, critics saw it for what it was: an instrument that gave increased power to City Hall and that muddled the meanings of civil liberties, order, and peace. For this reason, on 8 November, when members of the executive committee presented the bylaw to city council, elected officials could hear the ringing of sirens, helicopters, and protestors from inside City Hall. And although members of council could not see them, perhaps they had heard that protestors were setting fire to effigies and symbolically burning the bylaw.⁸⁰ A few nights later, when the time came to vote on it, Mayor Drapeau gave the most impassioned speech of his career. According to the *Montreal Gazette* he pounded his desk and warned councillors that “demonstrators are preparing revolution in our home!” Councillor Abraham Cohen, a Second World War veteran and progressive lawyer, was the Civic Party’s only dissenting member when came the time to vote: “[I spent 60 days on the front lines] and I could now spend the same 60 days in jail for standing by my right to demonstrate. I always knew in the war exactly what I was fighting for. I was there so that people could demonstrate and speak freely at home ... always.”⁸¹ In the end, city council passed the bylaw with near-unanimity.

Once enacted, the bylaw gave politicians the power to ban any march, parade, or demonstration that had the slightest potential of leading to violence. However, it could not be used right away, or at all times. It could only be used for a period of thirty days beginning whenever city council invoke it. Incidentally, it took city council less than twenty-four-hours to

⁸⁰ “Protesters arrested in City Hall march,” *Montreal Gazette*, 13 November 1969.

⁸¹ Brian Stewart, “Protest ban now law,” *Montreal Gazette*, 13 November 1969.

invoke it, which made any type of public gathering or protest on public property (including parks and streets) illegal for the next thirty days.⁸²

While most Civic Party members hoped that the bylaw would quell the city's politically charged atmosphere, activists publicly denounced it as an infringement of civil rights and quickly organized to test the limits of what they alleged was an undemocratic and repressive municipal administration.⁸³ One of the most important act of defiance took place two weeks after it was enacted, and it was organized by the Front commun des Québécoises (FCQ).⁸⁴ Sociology student Louise Harel, who later served as interim leader of the Parti Québécois, told journalists that the FCQ was for “free women who want to show their opposition to an unfair and illegal bylaw,” and artist Lise Landry echoed her remark when she told journalists that the FCQ had been formed “solely for the purpose of protesting against the anti-demonstration bylaw.”⁸⁵ The women planned to defy the bylaw by marching from the Monument national to City Hall. On the eve of the march a member declared, “If we’re taking things to the streets, it’s because we don’t have a choice.”⁸⁶

⁸² City of Montreal, By-Law No. 3926, *relating to exceptional measures to safeguard the free exercise of civil liberties, to regulate the use of the public domain and to prevent riots and other violations of order, peace and public safety* (12 November 1969).

Eaton's Santa Claus Parade and the Grey Cup parade, both planned before the bylaw was passed, were exempted from the ban. While the Grey Cup's parade proceeded more-or-less as planned, Eaton's cancelled its parade to respect the municipal administration's recent decision. See Steve Penfold, *A Mile of Make-Believe: A History of the Eaton's Santa Claus Parade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 116.

⁸³ Lucie Laurin, *Des luttes et des droits : antécédents et histoire de la Ligue des Droits de l'Homme de 1936 à 1975* (Montréal : Les Éditions du Méridien, 1985), 82.

⁸⁴ Mills, *The Empire Within*, 119-20.

⁸⁵ Solange Chalvin, “Le Font commun des Québécoises descendra dans la rue, ce soir,” *Le Devoir*, 28 November 1969. Gilles Gariépy, “Le Front commun des Québécoises veut défier le règlement ‘qui mène droit vers le fascisme avoué’,” *La Presse*, 28 November 1969. Véronique O’Leary and Louise Toupin, *Québécoises deboutte! Tome 1* (Montréal: Éditions du Remue-ménage, 1982), 23. “Women marchers pick jail over fine,” *Montreal Gazette*, 15 August 1970.

⁸⁶ Solange Chalvin, “Le Font commun des Québécoises descendra dans la rue, ce soir,” *Le Devoir*, 28 November 1969.



Figure 11: A police officer attempts to disentangle protesters, some of whom can be seen wearing red headbands inscribed with the letters FLF. Doug Griffin, “A woman chained to other militant feminists is grabbed,” *Toronto Star*, 28 November 1969. *Toronto Star Archives, Baldwin Collection of Canadiana, Toronto Reference Library.*

Twenty-four hours later, on a frigid and windy November night, they stepped out of the Monument national and onto Saint-Laurent Boulevard. Journalists and photographers had gathered to the scene to see how the city would answer this challenge. As soon as the women stepped outside anti-riot officers – who had come prepared with helmets and weapons – moved towards them. The officers had a clear mandate; they would enforce the anti-demonstration bylaw and arrest those who dared defy it. It was immediately clear that the march to City Hall would not proceed, and so the women reorganized the demonstration into a sitting protest. Thirty demonstrators chained themselves to one-another with padlocks to evoke Montrealers’ unfreedoms and began chanting “Liberté, liberté!” and “Long live the illegal police strike!”⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Laval Le Borgne et Lucien Rivard, “150 femmes manifestent ‘assises’ sur la rue St-Laurent,” *La Presse*, 29 November 1969.

They noted the clear irony and the injustice of the city's legal system, which had allowed police officers to protest several weeks back, and now, the same officers were ready to send demonstrators to jail for protesting against the same municipal administration. Within minutes, 137 demonstrators were arrested and brought to jail. Several of them were renowned public figures, including Ginette Letondal, Marie Savard, and Denise Boucher.⁸⁸

All demonstrators, ranging from artists to clerks, domestic workers to students, were released overnight on a twenty-five dollar bail after officers had noted and filed their personal information for a later court date. In all, the riot police had allowed the demonstration to last 25 minutes. Although short-lived, the stand against the anti-demonstration bylaw extended far beyond November 1969. First, it set the stage for the Front de libération des femmes, which would become the most public manifestation of second-wave feminism in Montreal.⁸⁹ Second, when the women appeared at the municipal court they triggered a long legal battle against the bylaw by arguing that it was ultra vires – that is, beyond the legislative powers of the city – because it touched on an exclusively federal jurisdiction.⁹⁰ In April 1970 a Social Welfare Court judge, reviewing the case of twelve juvenile girls who had been arrested during that protest, declared the bylaw ultra vires because it assumed a power which falls exclusively into the constitutional orbit of Parliament.⁹¹ Although the city appealed the decision it was again declared ultra vires on 18 June 1970.⁹² At this point all women who had participated in the

⁸⁸ Guy Deshaies, “La requête des manifestantes pourrait entraîner l’abrogation du règlement 3926,” *Le Devoir*, 1 December 1969.

⁸⁹ O’Leary and Toupin, *Québécoises deboutte!*, 30.

⁹⁰ “Contestation du règlement anti-manifestation : Atmosphère inusitée à la Cour municipale,” *La Presse*, 1 December 1969.

Two weeks after the FCQ’s protest trade union leaders organized another nighttime protest in defiance of the bylaw. Among those present at this protest were writers, artists, intellectuals, and students. Like the FCQ’s protest this one would begin at the Monumental national; and like the FCQ’s protest it transformed into a sit-in when protestors were met by the Police Department’s anti-riot unit. Michel Auger, “Troisième manifestation contre le règlement antimanifestation,” *La Presse*, 11 December 1969.

⁹¹ Leon Levinson, “Protest ban declared illegal,” *Montreal Gazette*, 15 April 1970.

⁹² Marx, “The Montreal Anti-Demonstration By-Law - Bad Everywhere,” 348.

FCQ's protest had paid a twenty-five dollar fine, except Suzanne Corriveau and Lise Landry; both chose to spend eight days in jail rather than, in their words, "[contribute] to the coffers of the authoritarian and fascist Drapeau-Saulnier administration."⁹³ As social historian Dominique Clément notes, challenges to the anti-demonstration bylaw contributed to the early days of Canada's rights revolution and would soon "lead to a moment in history that revolutionized Canada's rights culture."⁹⁴ The City of Montreal, however, was determined to keep its bylaw and eventually appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada.

In autumn 1970 all eyes were on Montreal as Pierre Elliot Trudeau's federal government deployed the army and then invoked the War Measures Act in response to the kidnappings by the Front de Libération du Québec's (FLQ). For several weeks authorities held incredible power over the landscape; no distinction was made between private and public space, and night became a time of total control under the standing curfew.⁹⁵ Despite the significance of the Act, Montrealers would go to polling stations on 25 October for a municipal election. During the final three weeks of what was his most active campaign since 1960, Drapeau took the strongest position possible against the FLQ. He framed the election as a choice between order and chaos by confusing voters into thinking that the opposing party, the left-wing Front d'action politique (FRAP), was closely tied to the FLQ.⁹⁶ He was able to convince voters that there was a relationship between the two groups because a number of FRAP candidates and organizers were jailed under the War Measures Act. In the end Drapeau received 92 percent of votes and all fifty-two seats in council were awarded to the Civic Party. The result of the 1970 election was

⁹³ "Women marchers pick jail over fine," *Montreal Gazette*, 15 November 1970.

⁹⁴ Dominique Clément, *Human Rights in Canada: A History* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016), 86-7.

⁹⁵ See Michel Brault, (dir.), *Les ordres* (Montreal: Productions Prisma, 1974).

⁹⁶ Timothy Lloyd Thomas, *A City With a Difference: The Rise and Fall of the Montreal Citizen's Movement* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1997), 26. Andrew Sancton, "Montreal," in *City Politics in Canada*, ed. Warren Magnusson and Andrew Sancton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 73.

unequivocal and would remain the clearest mandate that Drapeau received during his extensive political career. It was a powerful showing because residents overwhelmingly voted for the party that represented law and order at a moment when Montreal faced great political uncertainty. At the same time, however, a sickening feeling settled in progressive Montrealers, because they saw how the result of that election would give the mayor more power and would leave his worst impulses unchecked.

The following year the municipal administration showed how far its power stretched during the bitter lock-out at the *La Presse* newspaper. After six months of negotiations between typesetters and the daily's owner, the Power Corporation of Canada (one of the most powerful financial empires in the country), management decided to lock-out its employees. The tense dispute escalated over the course of a few months, during which the employees received support from many left-leaning groups, including Quebec's three major trade unions, queer activists, and members of the Parti Québécois. This culminated with the three unions calling for a huge demonstration in support of *La Presse* employees in October 1971. Montreal's Police Department immediately identified the demonstration as having the potential for violence. It was what Montreal's new chief of police Jean-Jacques Saulnier (Lucien Saulnier's brother) called a "monster protest" at one point, and a "Nouveau 'Murray Hill'" at another. He sent a report to the executive committee and recommended invoking the anti-demonstration bylaw. The executive committee not only invoked the bylaw, but also declared a 50-block area around *La Presse*'s office off-limits to the public.⁹⁷ The demonstration planned for 29 October would be vastly larger than the one organized by the FCQ two years earlier, but the message remained

⁹⁷ Report by Chief Jean-Jacques Saulnier, "Violence appréhendée et manifestations à l'occasion du conflit qui s'envenime entre le Journal La Presse et des employés appuyés par de nombreux autres syndiqués ou organisations syndicales." City of Montreal, executive committee Meeting Minutes, 27 October 1971. VM074-6-D082, AVM; Auf der Maur, *Quebec: a chronicle 1968-1972*, 97.

the same. Central to both protests was a challenge to the municipal administration and its anti-demonstration bylaw: “the atmosphere among protestors was that the desire to defy Drapeau’s anti-demonstration bylaw was as strong as that to denounce Power Corporation.”⁹⁸ And like the FCQ’s protest this one would head southbound too, toward the city’s centre of power.

By nightfall somewhere between 8,000 and 15,000 protestors gathered at Carré Saint-Louis, the city’s symbolic centre of rebellion. The square, mostly known as a left-friendly space where people exchanged ideas, drugs, sex, and art, saw its usual rebellious crowd blend with trade union leaders and activists. Moreover, because the march was held at night it brought together a coalition of vastly separate groups that would not have been possible during the day: Université de Montréal’s union, recently unemployed Canadair workers, firefighters, the truck driving union known as the “Gars de Lapalme,” and many other unionists and citizens.⁹⁹ At 8:00 P.M. the large crowd started moving to the square’s edge under the command of Parti Québécois MNA Robert Burns and the presidents of the main trade unions. As the march headed down Saint-Denis Street the men steering it allegedly told the crowd that they would turn west on Dorchester Boulevard so that they could make their way to University Street and end at the Tour de la Bourse, the heart of Montreal’s financial district.¹⁰⁰ But awaiting the crowd several blocks away were hundreds of police officers who were set on enforcing the bylaw. The Police Department’s anti-riot unit had installed powerful floodlights, which beamed onto the empty street’s pavement. When the protestors reached the scene half an hour later, at the corner of Craig and Saint-Denis streets, the two factions clashed violently.

⁹⁸ Pierre Richard, “La marche tourne à l’affrontement,” *Le Devoir*, 30 October 1971.

⁹⁹ In the days leading up to the march, Louis Laberge requested that “all unionized workers of Quebec” take part in the march; executive committee Meeting Minutes, 27 October 1971. VM074-6-D082, AVM.

¹⁰⁰ Yves Ménard, “Le lock-out de *La Presse* et l’émeute du 29 octobre 1971 : un conflit d’envergure nationale,” *Bulletin du RCHTQ*, vol. 28, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 19.

According to activists, what unfolded was nothing short of a planned attack on organized labour.¹⁰¹ Later, Captain Wilfrid Bouchard, who trained anti-riot officers based on “books put out by the Chicago police, the FBI, and the Canadian Armed Forces,” disclosed that the evening turned out to be one of the toughest jobs his unit ever faced.¹⁰² The violence started because of a tactical decision to place buses along Dorchester Boulevard, which meant that the crowd could not move westward like organizers had planned. And because police officers blocked the southbound route it effectively trapped demonstrators in a cul-de-sac. “After an endless face-to-face,” wrote union leader Louis Laberge about the quandary, “we heard someone yell ‘GO!’ and the police came charging at us, with an incredible brutality and great blows [...] The motorcycle unit also charged at people who left the scene. At one point, we had to hide behind a car to avoid an officer who drove at us several times.”¹⁰³ Once the dust had settled, it became possible to survey the extent of the damage: incinerated buses and police cruisers, injuries, and death. Ambulances rushed from the scene to different hospitals, and despite the paramedics’ attempt to ease the load on medical professionals, the hundreds of injuries overloaded the city’s emergency rooms. Tragically, the fracas led to the death of FLF sympathizer Michèle Gauthier, who succumbed to an asthma attack.¹⁰⁴

In the aftermath, labour leaders all but declared class war during a mass rally organized by the Common Front (an alliance of the province’s three major trade unions). Union leader Louis Laberge spoke adamantly to a crowd of 14,000-strong: “We give serious warning to the wealthy and to the established powers that this first victim [Michèle Gauthier] might be

¹⁰¹ Auf der Maur, *Quebec: A Chronicle 1968-1972*, 92-7. Ménard, “Le lock-out de *La Presse*.” Patrizia Gentile, “‘À bas la répression contre les homosexuels!’ Résistance et surveillance des gais à Montréal, 1971-1976,” in *Une histoire des sexualités au Québec*, 201.

¹⁰² Strato Liberopoulos, “Police mobile unit jails 200 monthly,” *Sunday Express*, 24 March 1974.

¹⁰³ Quoted in Ménard, “Le lock-out de *La Presse* et l’émeute du 29 octobre 1971,” 21.

¹⁰⁴ O’Leary and Toupin, *Québécoises deboutte!*, 30, 124-8. Ménard, “Le lock-out de *La Presse*,” 22-5.

followed by others, but in the future the victims won't only be on *our* side.”¹⁰⁵ Many wondered why and how police officers had accepted orders to crackdown on strikers when, in 1969, they had been on strike. October 1971 was, in the words of Auf der Maur, “one of the most profound and important contemporary turning points in the Quebec historical process.” Just as the city was entering a new moment of labour turmoil (which led to a province-wide general strike in 1972), labour leaders read the Policemen's Brotherhood out of the labour movement.¹⁰⁶

Red Weekend: The Firefighter Strike of 1974

*I'm not proud of last week. I am too proud of my city to rejoice in what happened... But I cannot accept that we hold the Civic Party accountable for this tragedy.*¹⁰⁷

– Jean Drapeau (1974)

Another labour conflict pitted the municipal administration against firefighters in 1974. It began with the inflation crisis of the early-1970s, which eroded the prosperity achieved in the 1960s. As with many other places in the Western world, Montreal experienced the end of post-World War II economic expansion with a dramatic stagflation during the 1973-1975 recession. The embargo of Saudi Arabian oil led to a surge in petrol prices, which had a profound impact on businesses. The growing rate of inflation set the conditions for a creeping conservatism in social and political affairs.¹⁰⁸ While this was the global context in which the firefighters' union and the city started labour talks, other, decidedly more local issues framed the affair. While the

¹⁰⁵ Cited in Nick Auf der Maur, “The Trigger was the La Presse Affair,” *Last Post* (December 1971-January 1972): 10. I have italicized “our” to denote the clear opposition between “us” – the labour movement, and “them” – Power Corporation, Civic Party, and the Policemen's Brotherhood.

¹⁰⁶ Auf der Maur, *Quebec: A Chronicle 1968-1972*, 98-9. Mills, *The Empire Within*, 199-200. *La Presse*'s activities resumed on 10 February 1972 after negotiating for months. For more on that process see the memoir by then Employment and Workforce Minister Jean Cournoyer, *Dans le feu de l'action* (Montreal: Éditions de l'Homme, 2012), 162-75.

¹⁰⁷ Jean-V. Dufresne, “Les nuits rouges: Drapeau blâme les pompiers d'avoir attendu jusque-là,” *Le Devoir*, 5 November 1974.

¹⁰⁸ In fact, in the months preceding the strike the Canadian government held a symposium in Montreal on the very question of inflation, see Conference Board in Canada, *Perspective on inflation: a symposium held in Montreal, January, 1974: a report* (Ottawa: Conference Board in Canada, 1974). See also Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010).

mayor had been able to end the 1969 wildcat strike by giving police officers substantial raises and benefits, the firefighters' demands had not been fully met. Therefore, in 1971 and 1972 Montreal firefighters went on strike for a week when salaries fell far below those of the Toronto Fire Department; however, a firefighting team kept guard throughout these strikes and, facing the dual threat of heavy fines and the dissolution of their union, the rest of the workforce headed back to fire stations.¹⁰⁹ In July 1973, an arbitration tribunal recommended increasing salaries by 4.3 percent raise. However, this was a trivial, borderline insulting, offer according to the MFA because the city raised salaries 12.5 percent for police and 11.6 percent for blue-collar workers when inflation hit 14 percent that year.

Moreover, Mayor Drapeau was busy with both a municipal election campaign and preparations for the 1976 Summer Olympics. The 1974 municipal election was Drapeau's chance to hold an unprecedented fifth consecutive term and, in a break with traditional silence, Drapeau hit the campaign trail with vigor alongside Civic Party candidates under the slogan "Together for tomorrow." Aside from campaigning, Drapeau was equally, if not more, busy preparing the city for the 1976 Summer Olympics Games. Indeed, for the second time in less than a decade the world's attention would be fixed upon Montreal, and once again the event's masterminding fell onto him. Logistics for the Olympics consumed his time and interest, day and night, as he made sure that it would be delivered on time. It was all but official policy that routine city business be placed on the backburner. But as had been the case during Expo 67, union leaders used the Olympic Games as a vehicle for demanding better wages and labour conditions. For example, the employees of city's public transit authority went on a wildcat strike, again, and despite a back-to-work order from the courts the union remained on strike. After forty days of disorder Liberal Premier Robert Bourassa convened the Quebec labour

¹⁰⁹ Cournoyer, *Dans le feu de l'action*, 176.

minister, the presidents of trade unions, and Jean Drapeau. After a long night of bargaining the strike ended on 19 September 1974 when salaries were indexed to the rate of inflation.¹¹⁰ After that strike, and as the mayor returned to the campaign trail and to Olympic-related dossiers, an unexpected strike by Montreal firefighters caught him off-guard.

The firefighters had started to pressure the Civic Party with work-to-rule action in late-August. Because this failed to achieve anything the firefighters decided to use more drastic tactics, especially after the city abolished eighty firefighting jobs and closed nine fire stations without warning. Therefore, what began with small acts of vandalism, like puncturing hoses and sabotaging city equipment, quickly escalated to more serious criminal activity. After two fire stations were set ablaze on the night of 8 October, the city placed on-duty police officers inside city stations.¹¹¹ The police left no doubt that it would not side with labour during this conflict too. For weeks talks stagnated, however, and negotiation channels broke down. Finally, the strike began at nightfall on Thursday, 31 October, when firefighters scheduled for the night shift did not clock-in. For a whole weekend all but fifty-five of Montreal's 2,400 firefighters remained on strike.¹¹² Later it would be revealed that those who chose to stay behind had received anonymous phone-calls threatening violent retributions if they did not go on strike.¹¹³

As had been the case during the 1969 strike, many firefighters headed to the Paul Sauvé Arena where they camped out and received the latest news from union leaders. As the personnel headed to the arena, fires began raging across the city. Sensing that the worst was about to happen MFA president Jean L'Abbé urged union members to return to fire stations on the

¹¹⁰ Cournoyer, *Dans le feu de l'action*, 239-40. Bernard Descôteaux, "Montréal roule de nouveau," *Le Devoir*, 20 September 1974.

¹¹¹ Jean-Paul Charbonneau, "Incendie dans deux casernes de pompiers," *La Presse*, 9 October 1974.

¹¹² Réjean Tremblay and Jean-Paul Charbonneau, "Les pompiers refusent d'obéir," *La Presse*, 1 November 1974.

¹¹³ George A. Allison, *Rapports d'enquêtes au Procureur général de la province de Québec au sujet des incendies survenus dans la ville de Montréal entre le 31 octobre 1974 et le 3 novembre inclusivement* (Montreal: Ministère de la Justice, 30 May 1975), 13.

strike's first night. But when he took the stage and announced his change of heart and begged the firefighters to consider what was unfolding across the city, they heckled and jeered at him. "I appeal to your common sense and implore you to return to your stations," he stated. "The city is burning all over the place. I also ask Robert Bourassa to intervene in what has become a wild conflict. I implore him to engage with Jean Drapeau."¹¹⁴ Although the firefighters refused to cooperate, his last wish, however, was granted when he was awarded the opportunity to speak with Premier Bourassa and Labour Minister Jean Cournoyer live on CKAC Radio during Matthias Rioux's talk show. In fact, throughout the weekend the talk show, hosted by ex-union leader and future provincial Labour Minister, served as a middle ground between the MFA, municipal, and provincial leaders as each phoned to tell the public their point of view. During that initial conversation, however, Labour Minister Cournoyer explained that the City of Montreal was the exclusive body responsible for the fire brigade and so the Liberal government would not be taking a position on extra-jurisdictional matters. Amid an extremely tense situation, and sensing that the Quebec government could no longer stay idle, Rioux cheekily retorted to his guests: "It seems as though the municipal administration has, once again, brought the government of Quebec to its knees!"¹¹⁵

Because no headway had been made during the first hours of the strike, Jean L'Abbé returned to the Paul Sauvé Arena with a stunning announcement. He and the rest of the MFA's executive committee had resigned because, as far as they were concerned, there was nothing more to do if those in power refused to bargain.¹¹⁶ At 3:30 A.M. on 1 November, L'Abbé left the arena and returned to CKAC's building after having agreed to speak as the MFA's

¹¹⁴ Jean-V. Dufresne, "Montréal sans pompiers," *Le Devoir*, 1 November 1974.

¹¹⁵ André Béliveau, "Week-end rouge," *Le Magazine Maclean*, February 1975, 30.

¹¹⁶ *La Presse* reported that Jean L'Abbé said: "J'ai assez entendu [Jean Cournoyer], je m'en vais sur le champ remettre ma démission à mes membres. Nous n'avons pu régler ce conflit d'une façon professionnelle; ça ne donne rien d'avoir un syndicat si c'est pour toujours se faire bafouer." Réjean Tremblay and Jean-Paul Charbonneau, "Les pompiers refusent d'obéir," *La Presse*, 1 November 1974.

spokesperson, not as its president. With a beer in hand, L'Abbé spoke candidly about the futility of negotiating with Drapeau as thousands of listeners, including Premier Bourassa and Labour Minister Cournoyer, listened attentively.¹¹⁷ “This municipal administration, which supposedly stands for law and order,” wrote *La Presse* journalist Marcel Adam, “pushes upstanding civil servants toward vice, disorder, and criminality.”¹¹⁸ And as fires raged across the city the municipal administration did not attempt to speak with MFA leaders but instead requested help from neighbouring fire brigades.

Unlike the 1969 Night of Terror, the vandalism seemed more random.¹¹⁹ Each newspaper reported that out-of-control fires, riots, and vandals had raged across town from the Plateau to Verdun to Rosemont.¹²⁰ The dry and windy environmental conditions were particularly favourable for the spread of fires that swept across homes, businesses, and public space. The wind would have carried the pungent odours of things burning across the city as well. Squinting to cut down glare, thousands who were not busy extinguishing the bright flames stood still and marvelled at the extraordinary heat coming from them. Montrealers, like twenty-one-year-old student Nick Paré and his friends, banded together, cooperating to save lives and homes. He described the heat and the public rage to a journalist:

About 20 of us ran down to the fire station (a block south on Montcalm) and broke in. There was a cop there and he pulled his gun on us. Some guys put him up against the wall and some more police came in after us and cooled him down. My cousin started the fire truck and drove it up the street. None of us knew what to do [...] All the time the (striking) firemen were going at the hoses with axes and scissors and punching holes in the compressor. They were harassing us – trying to get in our way.

It was the middle of the night but it was light out because of the fire. Flames were jumping right up over these new buildings. And it was so hot a T-shirt was all you had to wear. If you got water on you it would dry right off.

¹¹⁷ André Béliveau, “Week-end rouge,” *Le Magazine Maclean*, February 1975, 30-2.

¹¹⁸ Marcel Adam, “Bourassa doit mettre fin à ce gâchis de l’administration Drapeau,” *La Presse*, 1 November 1974.

¹¹⁹ Fires broke out at a lumber yard in Verdun, the Old Doctors Hospital on Côte-des-Neiges Road, and in Saint-Jacques Ward. The following day it hit the former Knights of Columbus Hall in Rosemont, near the future Olympic site. “Bourassa won’t intervene: 2,400 firefighters off the job,” *Montreal Gazette*, 1 November 1974. Rene Laurent and Steve Kowch, “Drapeau enters talks as chiefs battle fires,” *Montreal Gazette*, 2 November 1974.

¹²⁰ For a condensed timeline see “Three-day fires list: Arson suspected,” *Montreal Gazette*, 4 November 1974.

I'll never forget it – firemen trying to stop us from saving the buildings and even the people who lived in them. I blame Drapeau too. Is it true what he said: “They can have another night of this before I'll give in.”

Could he really have said that?¹²¹



Figure 12: One of the nighttime fires during the Red Weekend. Centre de documentation en histoire du Service de sécurité incendie de Montréal.

Friday afternoon Matthias Rioux was back on-air with sleep-deprived Jean L'Abbé. The men listened to callers who overwhelmingly supported the firefighters – out of thirty-five callers only three agreed with Mayor Drapeau's passivity.¹²² During daytime on Friday the fires diminished, but as soon as dusk hit they amplified at an alarming rate – especially in Saint-Jacques Ward. The extent of those fires was observed by another CKAC journalist who boarded the station's small Cessna 182 Skylane plane to get a bird's-eye view of the destruction on the following morning. Circling over the city the reporter poignantly described the disorder, helplessness, and exhaustion:

¹²¹ Glen Allen, “Anguish smolders in burnt-out district,” *Montreal Gazette*, 4 November 1974.

¹²² André Béliveau, “Week-end rouge,” *Le Magazine Maclean*, February 1975, 30.

It was a terrible night [...] I know now what despondence and helplessness mean. Everyone was exhausted. I wondered how it would end. The wind, the raging fires, and embers; it created a climate of terror and looked like a warzone. We knew that people were sleeping in houses that were at risk. I don't want to be cynical, but the sound was at once amazing and pathetic too. For example, we recorded and aired a woman's wail that made one of our editors cry.¹²³

The fires had been wholly uncontained and had spread across neighbourhoods. In his autobiography, tailor businessman Alvin Cramer Segal wrote how, despite being far from the heat of the action, his factory had been firebombed.¹²⁴

Finally, the mayor made a noteworthy public appearance when he spoke to Matthias Rioux on CKAC Saturday afternoon. While Drapeau thought CKAC was an excellent venue to deliver his message, he was completely blindsided by Jean L'Abbé's impromptu phone call and his request that the mayor negotiate the MFA's contract live on-air!¹²⁵ The mayor was furious and had been caught off-guard. Nevertheless, he agreed to negotiate with the MFA along with the provincial government later that night, away from public scrutiny. At the stroke of midnight on Sunday, 3 November, as he entered the Hydro-Quebec building and made his way past Jean-Paul Mousseau's gigantic *Lumière en mouvement dans la couleur*, Jean Drapeau willingly entered into negotiations with Premier Bourassa. Bourassa spoke about the hefty bill that would result from the fires that had been raging along Coloniale Street, Saint-Michel Boulevard, and in Saint-Jacques Ward, and which he had seen from the vista of his seventeenth-floor office. Standing above the city and overlooking the contrast between the flames and the darkness of night Bourassa concluded that Drapeau's stubborn idiosyncrasy had reached its limit. But when Drapeau exited Bourassa's office he had effectively won his gamble; Bourassa told him that the province would cover the cost difference between the arbitration tribunal's report and what the

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Alvin Cramer Segal, *My Peerless Story: It Starts with the Collar* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 97-8.

¹²⁵ "Montréal en otage: policiers et pompiers font la grève," *Tout le monde en parlait*, 2007, accessed 24 April 2020, <https://curio.ca/fr/video/montreal-en-otage-policiers-et-pompiers-font-la-greve-4134/>.

city was willing to pay. This settlement was exactly what Drapeau wanted to hear. Meanwhile, in another room, adjacent to where Drapeau and Bourassa had been negotiating, Cournoyer and L'Abbé waited. As they observed the fires raging across the city too, L'Abbé allegedly turned to the anxious labour minister and told him not to worry, "because the only things burning are cockroaches and bedbugs; no one's in danger."¹²⁶

Finally, on Sunday, 3 November at 2:30 A.M., the provincial government, the municipal administration, and the MFA signed what one journalist called a "truce" and what Cournoyer stated was Bourassa's way of ending a "social problem."¹²⁷ By 4:00 A.M. the firefighters were on the streets extinguishing the remaining fires. By some miracle there were no casualties.

After the Fires

The Red Weekend was another nighttime event that defined the power struggle between Quebec and Montreal, and it ended when Bourassa caved to Drapeau's demands to rescue the province's metropolis. Indeed, it was the financial compensation offered by the province that ended the 60-hour conflict, during which eighteen fires destroyed 150 family homes and many other businesses. Like the strike of 1969 the mayor and the MFA had not found common ground; instead, they had let chaos reign. During the darkest of hours, when Drapeau failed his constituents and firefighters punctured hoses, police cruisers had escorted fourteen suburban fire brigades from Verdun, Côte Saint-Luc, Outremont, LaSalle, and Ville Saint-Laurent as well as the Canadian Ski Patrol, into the city.¹²⁸ And despite limiting the magnitude of the fires Drapeau refused to recognize the help that they had provided. In fact, it was a suburban brigade that,

¹²⁶ Cournoyer, *Dans le feu de l'action*, 243.

¹²⁷ Claude Gravel, "Mésentente sur le sens de l'accord avec les pompiers," *La Presse*, 4 November 1974.

¹²⁸ Robert Bourassa, *Journal des débats de l'Assemblée nationale*, 1 November 1974, Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée nationale du Québec. "Les services d'incendie de banlieue ont fait leurs 'preuves'," *La Presse*, 4 November 1974. Glen Allen, "Anguish smoulders in burnt-out district," *Montreal Gazette*, 4 November 1974. "Montréal fait appel à la banlieue," *La Presse*, 1 November 1974.

early on Saturday morning, extinguished two arsons at Drapeau's brother-in-law's hotel on Drummond Street.¹²⁹ In the aftermath the provincial government ordered Montreal to pay for the services it had received.



Figure 13: *The remains of an apartment on Rivard Street after the weekend. VM007-Y-1 D38, AVM.*

It was a cruel twist of fate that the hardest hit neighbourhood was also one of the city's poorest. The overnight fires in Saint-Jacques had reduced homes to rubbles and left hundreds destitute. Receiving the pain and suffering of a conflict over which they held no influence, members of the community saw their livelihood, goods, and properties all vanish over the course of a few nights. Alline and George Allain and their three young boys spent Saturday night huddled together in La Fontaine Park after someone had set fire to the grocery store below their apartment: "It's all gone, all gone. Eight rooms full of furniture – everything we had – all

¹²⁹ Michel Auger, "L'incendie de l'hôtel LaSalle : Visait-on le maire Drapeau?," *La Presse*, 4 November 1974. "Canada: Montreal's Striking Firemen Back at Work," *Reuters*, 4 November 1974, accessed 13 May 2020, www.britishpathe.com.

gone.”¹³⁰ Another victim, Monique Beaudoin, told a journalist, “Everything we owned was in there, and we sure don’t have any insurance. My husband isn’t working now, so I don’t know what we’ll do.” She had not eaten in three days and was visibly frustrated by the firefighters’ response to the labour conflict. One elderly couple suffered a similar fate; although they were able to find a new apartment, their rent had increased by a whopping 61 percent – an unforeseeable expense for the retirees.¹³¹ And one visually impaired man who lived alone and lost all his belongings told a journalist, “I starved myself to collect what I had. I ate so many eggs to save money to buy a camera, typewriter, sound system, and television.”¹³² In the immediate aftermath many Saint-Jacques residents relied on the Society of Saint-Vincent de Paul of Montreal and Sacré-Coeur Church for shelter, food, clothing, and, above all, comfort.¹³³ By Sunday, 3 November, over 150 families had applied for aid.

The city’s infrastructure and its citizens were seemingly defenceless without essential services, but also defenceless because those workers had elected to go on strike. On Saturday there had been only one daytime fire – at Hotel de LaSalle. It was a bold arson attempt targeting an establishment owned by Mayor Drapeau’s family. Otherwise, the daytime was uneventful. It was a lull that permitted fire crews from out-of-town to extinguish flames and embers – leftover residues from the previous night. On Saturday night, however, fires resumed with unforgiving ferocity.¹³⁴ Roving terror and disorder characterized nighttime for Montrealers during that weekend. Saint-Jacques residents spoke about the weekend’s violence by evoking the contrast

¹³⁰ Andrew Phillips, “Homeless try to cope: ‘It’s all gone,’ victim cries,” *Montreal Gazette*, 4 November 1974. Pierre Bertrand, “Les sinistrés poursuivent conjointement la ville de Montréal et les pompiers,” *Le Jour*, 5 November 1974.

¹³¹ They had been paying thirty-eight dollars for their unit before it went up in flames. *Tout le monde en parlait*, “Montréal en otage: policiers et pompiers font la grève,” 2007, accessed 24 April 2020, <https://curio.ca/fr/video/montreal-en-otage-policiers-et-pompiers-font-la-greve-4134/>.

¹³² Christiane Berthiaume, “Les victimes sont toujours les mêmes: les démunis...,” *La Presse*, 5 November 1974.

¹³³ Jean-Luc Duguay, “Le triste défilé des sinistrés du week-end rouge,” *Le Devoir*, 5 November 1974. Evelyn Dumas, “Plus de 60 familles ont vu brûler leur maison,” *Le Jour*, 4 November 1974.

¹³⁴ Allison, *Rapports d’enquêtes au Procureur général de la province de Québec*, 18.

of the flames against the night's dark skies. Patricia Harris (fig. 14) even compared the Red Weekend to her own experience during the nighttime bombing raids against London during the Blitz. And Louise Béland was stunned by the swiftness of the blazes: “The violence and the speed of the fire was unimaginable, incredible. The fire spread at the speed of light; it burned all the old wooden buildings.” And just as the MLT riot at the Murray Hill garage, the outcome looked the same – like “the end of some terrible battle in a terrible war,” according to journalists.¹³⁵



Figure 14: *Patricia Harris lost all her belongings that weekend, except two of her six cats. Bob Olsen, “More than 100 homes,” Toronto Star, 4 November 1974. Toronto Star Archives, Baldwin Collection of Canadiana, Toronto Reference Library.*

A few days later, Jean Drapeau returned to the campaign trail with his usual showmanship, telling people how, even in the wake of the Red Weekend, nothing would stop

¹³⁵ *Tout le monde en parlait*, “Montréal en otage: policiers et pompiers font la grève,” 2007, accessed 24 April 2020, <https://curio.ca/fr/video/montreal-en-otage-policiers-et-pompiers-font-la-greve-4134/>. Glen Allen, “Anguish smoulders in burnt-out district,” *Montreal Gazette*, 4 November 1974.

Montreal from becoming “one of the first, if not the first ranking city in the world.”¹³⁶ Trade union leaders and journalists rejected this civic boosterism and stated that he and the Civic Party should hold full responsibility for the tragic event.¹³⁷ But despite strong opposition, Montrealers remained convinced that Jean Drapeau was a capable leader, and they demonstrated this confidence by re-electing him. The mandate that he and the Civic Party received, however, was a far cry from the 1970 election when they won one of the largest victories in Montreal’s political history. In 1974 the Civic Party received only thirty-six of fifty-five council seats and Drapeau’s share of votes significantly dropped from his all-time high of 92 percent to 55 percent. Moreover, it was the first time in over a decade that the opposition was well organized. Indeed, 40 percent of the votes had gone to activist priest Jacques Couture, and one third of the seats to his party – the left-libertarian Montreal Citizens’ Movement (MCM). As one founding member of the party remembered, the election of 1970 had made Jean Drapeau’s power visibly more autocratic.¹³⁸ Montreal’s “New Left” realized that if it intended to pursue its social goals seriously, then it needed to organize politically. By June 1974 francophone and anglophone intellectuals, activists, members of the New Democratic Party and the Parti Québécois, and trade-unionists had united to found a new political party with the simple idea of improving Montrealers’ quality of life.¹³⁹

* * *

Who were the winners and who were the losers of the Red Weekend? While all parties might claim that they had won – after all, the MFA had been awarded a raise that the city did

¹³⁶ “Un compromise hâté par Québec a fait rentrer les pompiers,” *Le Devoir*, 4 November 1974. Evelyn Dumas, “Drapeau reprend sa campagne,” *Le Jour*, 4 November 1974.

¹³⁷ Evelyn Dumas, “Oui, il y a des responsables,” *Le Jour*, 4 November 1974. Claude Gravel, “Le bilan d’un désastre,” *La Presse*, 4 November 1974. Ingrid Saumart, “Les syndicats dissident: le maire Drapeau est le grand responsable,” *La Presse*, 5 November 1974.

¹³⁸ Henry Milner, “The Montreal Citizens’ Movement, Then and Now,” *Quebec Studies*, no. 6 (1988): 2.

¹³⁹ See Thomas, *A City with a Difference*.

not have to pay, and the provincial government had been able to contain a “social problem” – it was obvious that the real losers of that weekend were those whose fates placed them in the middle of the parties’ crossfires. Montrealers were left without services that they needed, and their care was thwarted by complex jurisdictional politics, leaving them caught in the middle. While only one firefighter was eventually charged with mischief (for a fire that razed a three-story building), as a whole they transformed their image from background figures of municipal order into rebellious dissenters.¹⁴⁰

In the remains of the ashes many wondered who would pay for the damages. Others wondered where the working-class people of Saint-Jacques would find shelter or aid in the aftermath. Answers came a year later when Fire Commissioner George Allison, the special investigator appointed by Justice Minister Jérôme Choquette, submitted his report. He traced the history of labour disputes and argued that the Red Weekend had been the logical evolution of the 1969 and 1971 strikes. According to Allison, the 1974 Red Weekend took place because firefighters had not been reprimanded during those previous strikes. Moreover, Allison also noted the criminal and unsolvable origin of many fires, a drastic evolution from 1969 and 1971, and how those who tried to contain arsons had been obstructed by striking firefighters who violently sabotaged the equipment and assaulted and threatened them.¹⁴¹ His report recommended, as did the federal government, that civil and criminal proceedings be taken against MFA members and leaders.¹⁴² To offset the costs of the damages the tribunal ordered the

¹⁴⁰ The City of Montreal Archives holds a box filled with litigation files and hundreds of photographs pertaining to buildings and structures that were damaged by fire and water during the Red Weekend – including an automobile repair shop, a hostel, a grocery store, Alvin Cramer Segal’s textile factory, a laundromat, and scores of apartment complexes. Many shops were damaged when an accidental fire ravaged the intersection at Mont-Royal and Papineau streets on the night of 1 November, including a bazaar, clothing stores, jewelry stores, and a newsstand. Archives de Montréal dossiers de litige VM007-Y-1-D20 to D-51, AVM; Allison, *Rapports d’enquêtes au Procureur général de la province de Québec*, 4.

¹⁴¹ Allison, *Rapports d’enquêtes au Procureur général de la province de Québec*, 3-5.

¹⁴² “Quatorze incendies criminels,” *La Presse*, 18 June 1975. Dave Thomas, “Arson widespread in ’74 walkout: Charges urged for firemen’s strike,” *Montreal Gazette*, 18 June 1975.

MFA to pay \$1 million plus interest to the victims. But as Jean L'Abbé later told Labour Minister Jean Cournoyer, the MFA was able to raise these funds through tax-deductible contributions, which meant that Canadian and Quebec taxpayers footed a significant part of the bill.¹⁴³

Conclusion

Generally speaking, during the 1960s the Drapeau-Saulnier administration took several steps in dealing with mundane policies like the maintenance of streets, sidewalks, and parks. But by the end of the decade, the Civic Party became less interested in dealing with urban planning and more with maintaining order. That is why, when the Vaisseau d'Or opened, Montrealers saw the mayor's newest enterprise as part and parcel of his taste for high culture and authority. The establishment's "discipline dining" was a business model based on precise organization. It also allowed the mayor to mingle with elites, discuss politics, and elaborate power by awarding jobs to people who had been loyal to him. This interconnectivity was mocked in the poetically titled book *La démocratie à Montréal : ou, Le vaisseau dort* (1972). The author, *La Presse* journalist Marcel Adam, drew attention to the Civic Party's poor civil rights record and claimed that the city was no longer a democratic institution – citing as examples Nightstick Monday, the anti-demonstration bylaw, and the lock-out at *La Presse*.¹⁴⁴ Although his book is a fierce polemic against Jean Drapeau and the Civic Party, this chapter has shown that his view was echoed by civil rights activists as well as students, feminists, writers, and trade union leaders. The Vaisseau d'Or had been a manifestation of Jean Drapeau's own dreams and wealth, but the three-hundred-seat venue closed for good in November 1971. After undergoing repairs

¹⁴³ Cournoyer, *Dans le feu de l'action*, 243.

¹⁴⁴ In fact, Adam openly wondered if Montreal was under an authoritarian regime. Adam, *La démocratie à Montréal*, 7, 64.

following the Night of Terror the restaurant had faced financial hardships, in part due to sewage backwater flooding the establishment as well as a costly dispute over rent.¹⁴⁵ But if Adam had waited two more years before publishing his book he would have written about the 1974 Red Weekend to enrich it; that labour conflict was another example of failed Civic Party labour policies. Moreover, the event illustrated the profound importance of nighttime as a moment that produced new forms of labour and social protests. The night had been used as a tool in labour negotiations for both Drapeau and his opponents.

Jean Drapeau's restaurant characterized his flair for high culture and obsession with order. When Drapeau's restaurant closed his vision of "respectable" culture would extend in the way that he managed street art and the culture of nightlife. In the nights leading up to the 1976 Summer Olympics, perhaps the apex of his personal achievement, he ensured that Montreal would be "presentable" to the world. Again, Montreal's presentability was grounded in visual aesthetics. Furthering the thesis that nighttime order was at the centre of his politics, Drapeau instructed the Police Department and city employees to clear the city of 'low-art' and sexual 'deviants' during the mid-1970s.

¹⁴⁵ "Le maire Drapeau est accusé de vol," *Le Devoir*, 12 November 1971. "Le 'Vaisseau d'Or' cadennassé," *Le Devoir*, 14 January 1971. McKenna and Purcell, *Drapeau*, 187-95.

Chapter 4: Repression and Activism, 1972-1981

During a rainy night from 13 to 14 July 1976, under the pretext that it contravened municipal bylaws, city employees censored the public art exhibition *Corridart dans la rue Sherbrooke*. Under the cover of darkness, the employees furtively stripped Sherbrooke Street of its installations and loaded the mangled art pieces into dump trucks. A few days later newspapers reported that Mayor Drapeau had, himself, ordered the nighttime destruction after he had seen *Corridart*. He claimed that its content was worthless, that it was an eyesore, and “an incredible pollution of Sherbrooke Street,” which is why he had it dismantled.¹

Consisting of seventeen visual art projects, two performance areas, and two gallery exhibits, *Corridart* had been installed a week earlier on 7 July. The artists taking part in *Corridart* felt that its portmanteau title fittingly described the light-hearted and festive five and a half mile-long “corridor of art” they had created on Sherbrooke Street, which was intended to add excitement to the 1976 Olympic Games. In fact, it was part of the event’s Arts and Culture Program, and had been funded by a small grant from the province as well as by the artists themselves – not by the municipal administration.² Laurent Lamy, head of the Visual and Plastic Arts sector, considered *Corridart* its most important art display, which is why he was horrified when he saw it being censored. He recalled: “One of the artists called me at 2:00 A.M. and asked, ‘what’s going on?’” Perplexed, Lamy got out of bed and went to see for himself, and when he arrived minutes later, he, too, wondered what was happening. He described the destruction as “a wicked re-enactment of the Night of Broken Glass” and declared that it had

¹ Michael Hoffman, “It wasn’t art, but ‘pollution’ Drapeau says of ’76 exhibit,” *Montreal Gazette*, 22 January 1981. “What happened when the mayor took a drive down Sherbrooke St.,” *Montreal Gazette*, 6 October 1979.

² *Corridart* was initially proposed by *Châtelaine*’s first editor-in-chief Fernande Saint-Martin. For more on the planning and development of the exhibition see Kim Louise Gauvin, “*Corridart* Revisited – Excavating the Remains,” (M.A. thesis (Art History), Concordia University, 1996).

been “a calculated move that could not have been possible in the light of day: maces, saws, chainsaws!”³ Indeed, the destruction appalled artists, organizers, and critics, and it would soon cause an incredible uproar about freedom of expression and censorship (fig. 15).

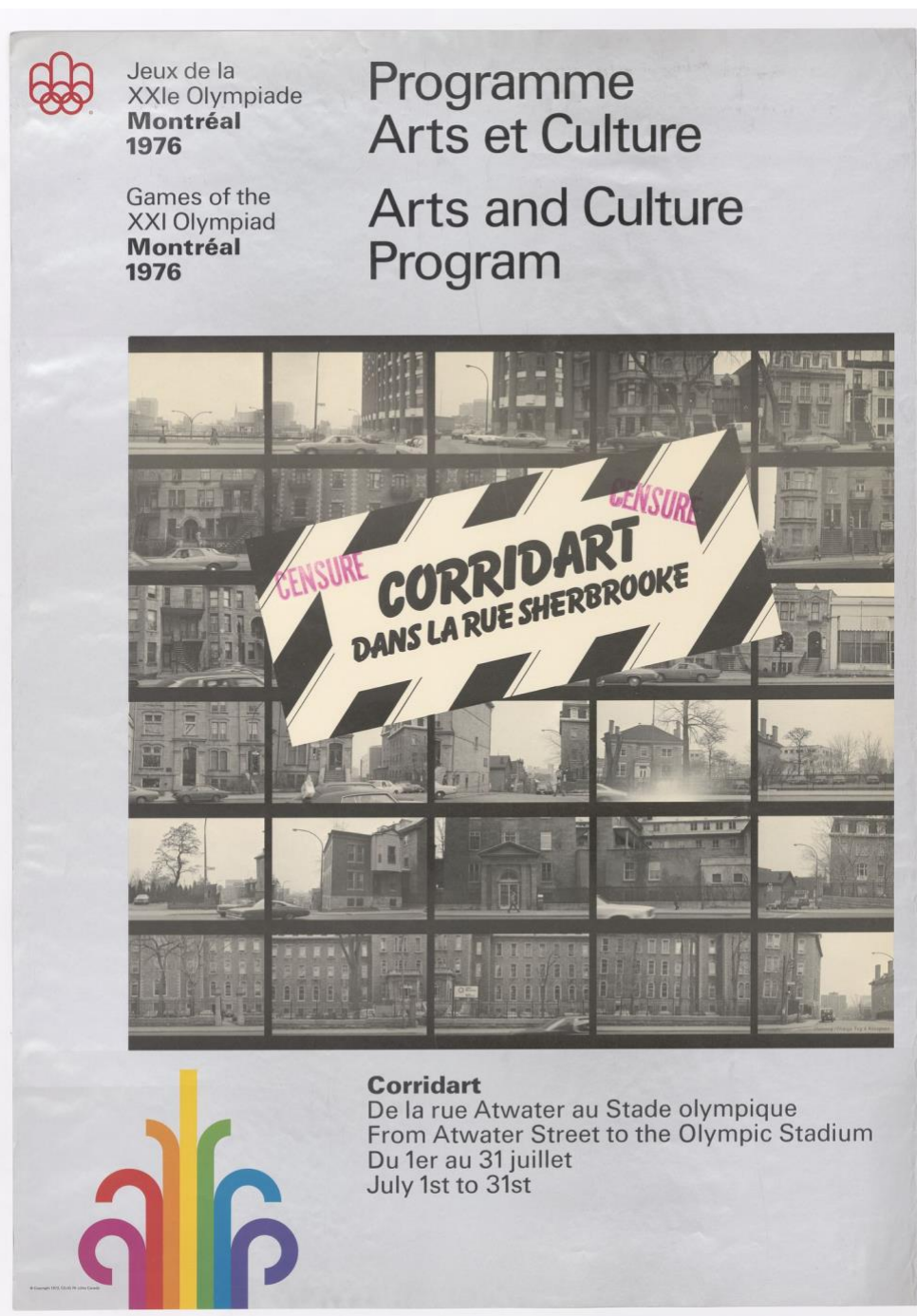


Figure 15: A stamp on an official poster for Corridart suggests that it was censored. “Arts and Culture Program, Games of the XXI Olympiad, Montréal 1976: Corridart dans la rue Sherbrooke,” (Montreal: COJO, 1976). 0004766914, BAnQ.

³ Bob McKenna (dir.), *À propos de l’Affaire Corridart* (Montreal: Multi-Monde, 2002).

Artist Françoise Sullivan recalled feeling bewildered when she heard that city employees had trashed her freshly installed artwork, *Hommage aux maisons où naissent les légendes*. Best described as a walking tour along Sherbrooke Street – between Aylmer and De Lorimier streets – her exhibit charted and celebrated the spaces where she and her contemporaries had spent many nights debating politics, art, and social change. It was a historical survey that threw light on the nocturnal hangout spots that represented spontaneous and exuberant forms of urban life, ones that spurred the city’s artistic efflorescence.⁴ Above all, however, it exposed the brute character of mid-twentieth-century reformism because it revealed how urban policies and speculative investment had decimated the city’s artistic network. It was ironic, she later reflected, how those mid-century nightspots and *Corridart* suffered similar fates under the very same mayor. Sullivan, and at least one other critic, would go as far as to connect *Corridart*’s censorship to sexual violence. “They acted in a barbaric way too,” she told filmmakers, “like thieves in the night. It was like a rape, really.”⁵ While it was a crude way to reflect on the way that authorities had despoiled public artworks, Sullivan nevertheless touched on the municipal administration’s merciless enterprise, one that was particularly perceptible at night.

Although Mayor Drapeau ordered *Corridart*’s censorship he was not a philistine. After all, what was the Vaisseau d’Or if not a shrine to high culture? Or the GMCA and Expo 67 for that matter? Drapeau was an avid patron of fine dining and opera, and he unabashedly enjoyed high culture. At the same time, however, he could not see the merit in other cultural forms; he openly wondered why intelligent people went to discotheques or enjoyed modern art, and he crusaded against erotic cinema and literature. In fact, *Corridart* was not the first time he

⁴ Twelve panels and six small exhibition cases drew attention to historical sites like the homes of Norman Bethune, Claude and Pierre Gauvreau, Françoise Loranger, Muriel Guilbault, and Émile Nelligan and to nocturnal meeting spots like Carré Saint-Louis, Swiss Hut, and Casa Pedro. Folder DR2000:0004:005:0006, D41-2015-002T, CCA.

⁵ McKenna, *À propos de l’Affaire Corridart*. Annette Kuhn, “Culture Shock: The Rape of Sherbrooke,” Folder 2012:0015:022:010, Fonds Melvin Charney, Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA).

censored artworks. Previously, he had instructed police to confiscate erotic films like *I, a Woman* (1965), *Quiet Days in Clichy* (1970), and *Sex and the Office Girl* (1972) – orders that left some perplexed and others, like the chief of the Morality Squad, to advocate for the legalization of prostitution because officers constantly had to “distinguish between nudism, pornography and art.”⁶ But what disturbed the mayor most about *Corridart* was its imagery and its antimodern message because it criticized his administration. Indeed, the artists had used the Olympic Games’ high-profile to attack him and his party’s legacy. Ultimately, he understood the profound meaning of art and its power for social change, which is why he responded to *Corridart*’s message. But because he knew that it could not be destroyed in broad daylight – seeing as there would be a predictable backlash – he organized the mission to be quick, covert, and performed under the cover of darkness. As the Games drew near and the city prepared to welcome international delegations, camera crews, Olympians, and tourists, it refined the parameters of moral acceptability.⁷ At night, in the shadow of the event that authorities would later claim was a glorious success, they purged “undesirable” elements from Montreal to safeguard the immaculate image sold in international magazines and newspapers. *Corridart* is an example of an effort to clear visible disobedience from the streets, but it was not the only one.

Reportedly, employees of the Comité Organisateur des Jeux Olympiques de 1976 (COJO) received specific instructions to confine and hide a different set of “non-conforming

⁶ “Le directeur de l’escouade de la Moralité: ‘Je serais en faveur de la prostitution légalisé,’” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 27 June 1971.

⁷ The Montreal Olympics was the subject of international controversy. Taiwan boycotted the Games because Canada refused to call it the Republic of China. Further, twenty-nine countries from Africa plus Iraq, Sri Lanka, and Guyana did the same when the International Olympic Committee refused to ban New Zealand from competition after its men’s national rugby team had toured apartheid South Africa despite the UN’s calls for a sporting embargo. See Donald Macintosh, Donna Greenhorn, and Michael Hawes, “Trudeau, Taiwan, and the 1976 Montreal Olympics,” *American Review of Canadian Studies*, vol. 21, no. 4 (1991): 423-48.

elements.”⁸ This simultaneous crackdown attempted to dismantle the city’s gay networks and the night scene that allowed members of the queer community to experiment with their sexuality, talk, dance, and find a home in the city. As the previous chapters have shown, Jean Drapeau’s control over the city took root in his attempt to bring moral order to public space, which required the policing of nightspots, parks, squares, and streets. This chapter shows how this historical moment continued in the leadup to the 1976 Olympic Games as the mayor used the event to remove “undesirable” elements from public view. Once again, night was a moment that enabled crackdowns on elements that “marred” the city’s reputation and image. And the struggle over whom or what had the right to public space took place in or near the downtown district because, as the mayor was well aware, that is where the Olympics’ hundreds of thousands of tourists would go to enjoy Montreal’s nightlife.⁹ Like previous chapters, this one shows how City Hall was highly concerned about the city’s appearance and reputation; it sheds light on what artists and gay activists alike called *La Drapolice*, a wordplay that renders clear the fusion of political and police forces.¹⁰

I begin this chapter by showing the ways that architects and artists influenced urban life. As Quebec art historiography shows, two strains of art influenced social change during the second half of the twentieth century: techno-pop art and political art.¹¹ The following pages focus on the second strain by providing two examples of 1970s political art in Montreal: *Montreal Plus or Minus?* (1972) and *Corridart dans la rue Sherbrooke* (1976). Characterizing

⁸ Paul-François Sylvestre, *Les homosexuels s’organisent au Québec et ailleurs* (Montreal: Éditions Homeureux, 1979), 140.

⁹ The 1976 Summer Olympics benefited many Montrealers who relied on the tourist economy. Telling examples are the 30 percent increase of cab ride fares between 1975 and 1976 and the influx of hotel chains in the city centre: Hyatt Regency, Four Seasons, Holiday Inn, Ramada, Travelodge, and the Meridien group. Warren, *Histoire du taxi à Montréal*, 262-3; Broadway, “Montreal’s Changing Landscape,” 41.

¹⁰ See Pierre Dupras, *La Drapolice* (Montreal: Éditions Québec-Press, 1972).

¹¹ Gaston Saint-Pierre, “Illusions et désillusions autour de l’idée de vouloir changer le monde,” in *Déclics, art et société : le Québec dans les années 1960 et 1970*, ed. Rose Marie Arbour (Quebec: Musée de la civilisation, 1999), 195.

both exhibitions is a set of playful artworks that showed the disequilibrium of modern urban life. And although a lot has been written about each event, their kinship, as art historian Johanne Sloan remarks, remains elusive.¹² Therefore, part of this chapter's goal is to reconcile the gap separating the two and seeing them as part of a single comprehensive act of public contestation that challenged the Civic Party's policies. I achieve this by placing their coordinator, Université de Montréal professor of architecture Melvin Charney, at the heart of the narrative. At first glance *Montreal, Plus or Minus?* might appear like an odd choice to include in a dissertation about nighttime governance during the Drapeau years. But because the exhibition challenged the mayor's vision of Montreal, and commented on the sore state of city politics, it captured how residents had come to feel about the city's rapid mid-twentieth-century makeover. And this lit a great debate about the need to slowdown the pace of destruction and development in the city, which led the Quebec government to pass the Cultural Property Act against the destruction of historic sites. Moreover, though Drapeau never saw *Montreal Plus or Minus?*, the mayor knew that disillusioned artists mocked his political project.¹³ In the summer of 1976 Charney attempted to spur further political debate with *Corridart*. *Corridart*'s exhibits, selected after a call for submission (opened exclusively to Quebec artists) and months of planning, also highlighted the social, political, economic, and environmental dangers of unbridled development. This time, however, the authorities censored the exhibition's message, an action that they tried to justify by arguing that *Corridart* was "downright provocative and blasphemous – showcasing a foul and unliveable city."¹⁴ Notwithstanding the exhibition's provincial source of funding, the city's action reaffirmed its control over public space during the Olympic Games.

¹² Johanne Sloan, "Montréal plus ou moins, 1972: Urban Knowledge Meets Conceptual Attitude," *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2018): 51.

¹³ According to the Museum's press office no politician toured the exhibition. Michael White, "Montreal Plus Or Minus? The minus sign won the day," *Montreal Gazette*, 2 September 1972.

¹⁴ Bernard Morrier, "Corridart : le jugement rendu vers la fin mai," *Le Devoir*, 31 January 1981.

Therefore, historicizing *Corridart's* censorship not only requires an overview of the 1976 exhibition itself but of its interconnectivity with the broader trajectory of political art.

Elsewhere, the same governing strategy was deployed in attacks on the gay community. Starting over a year before the Games, and spanning the course of several months, the city cracked down on dozens of gay spots like Aquarius, Baby Face, and Lime Light, and used its authority to repress gay activism. In fact, police in Montreal, as well as in Ottawa and Toronto, raided queer bathhouses, editorial rooms, bars, and nightclubs to make Canada's image as "clean" and "immaculate" as possible for the duration of the Olympic Games.¹⁵ Cities were able to conduct these raids under the vague terms of the "bawdy-house" law, and the full extent of this pan-Canadian effort can be seen in the criminal statistics put out annually by Statistics Canada; between the years 1974 and 1982 the bawdy-house offences fluctuated drastically, hitting a high of 1,143 in 1975 – the year before the Olympics – and a low of 269 in 1982.¹⁶ Thus, this chapter reviews the pre-Olympic crackdowns to bridge ongoing conversations in art history, urban governance, and queer history. While Dominique Clément, Bruce Kidd, Gary Kinsman, and Patrizia Gentile have mapped out how local and national police departments enabled the largest peacetime security operation in Canadian history for the Olympics, the focus here is on the city of Montreal's reconfiguration of public space.¹⁷ The raids on the gay community and the censorship of art exhibits, was a process that allowed Mayor Drapeau to

¹⁵ See issues no. 23 and no. 25 of *The Body Politic*. For more on bathhouse raids see Tom Hooper, "'Enough is Enough': The Right to Privacy Committee and Bathhouse Raids in Toronto, 1978-83," (PhD diss. (History), York University, 2016).

¹⁶ Charges under the bawdy-house provisions were infrequent in the Territories or in the Maritime provinces, places that were far from the Olympic spotlight. Paul Fraser, *Pornography and Prostitution in Canada: Report of the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1985), 410.

¹⁷ See Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile, "Sexual Policing and National Security: Sex Scandals, Olympic Clean-Ups, and Cross-Country Organizing," in *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation*, 302-35 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010). Bruce Kidd, "'The Army's Presence Will Be Obvious' (Montreal 1976)," in *Surveilling and Securing the Olympic: From Tokyo 1964 to London 2012 and Beyond*, ed. Vida Bajc, 162-79 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). Dominique Clément, "The Transformation of Security Planning for the Olympics: The 1976 Montreal Games," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 29 (2017): 27-51.

mould the city's image to his liking. At night, city police equipped themselves with crowbars to pry their way into bathhouses and nightclubs, and city employees used the same tools to wreck the artworks lining Sherbrooke Street. Ultimately, night was a moment for authorities to express control over public and social spaces, through structure, order, regulation, and control. And as community activist Ross Higgins notes this process stretched both before and after the Olympics. In the end, after intense repression and violence, Montreal's queer community emerged somewhat triumphant when the Parti Québécois government responded to activism by amending the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms to include sexual orientation as a prohibited ground for discrimination in 1977.¹⁸

The City as Œuvre: *Montreal, Plus or Minus?* (1972)

Like many things, space is moulded according to political and historical context, and in mid-1970s Montreal, the power of financial elites had come to dominate it. According to one estimate construction projects for downtown exceeded \$1.2 billion during this period.¹⁹ The single most forceful one was Place Desjardins, whose \$200-million price-tag promised to completely renew one of downtown Montreal's most neglected blocks, which was nestled between the Red Light district and Place des Arts. The area had been home to rows of low-rise cheap clothing stores, novelty shops, and run-down rooming houses with an "unsavory history of poverty, small crime and prostitution."²⁰ In the end, the project displaced 360 residents, and although Mouvement Desjardins supported a relocation plan for evicted residents (including

¹⁸ Groupe Marxiste Révolutionnaire, "Against the Repression Organize the Response," S3, D1, Groupe Homosexuel d'Action Politique (GHAP), Archives Gaies du Québec (AGQ); Dossier Ross Higgins, F0001, GHAP, AGQ. Manon Tremblay, "Mouvements sociaux et opportunités politiques : les lesbiennes et les gais et l'ajout de l'orientation sexuelle à la Charte québécoise des droits et libertés," *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*, vol. 42, no. 2 (2013): 295-322.

¹⁹ Charles Lazarus, "What's going up and where," *Montreal Star*, 13 September 1975. For a comprehensive assessment of mid-1970s projects see Chapter 3 in Gabeline, Lanken, and Pape, *Montreal at the Crossroads*.

²⁰ Frederick Louder, "Montreal's downtown moves east," *City Magazine*, vol. 1 (1975): 36.

compensation and rent subsidies) the city's Planning Department rejected the financial institution's involvement in housing relocation. Two years later, a \$100-million project for Place Guy Favreau materialized under similar circumstances. This project preyed upon a slate of low-rise buildings in Montreal's Chinatown. Although the project was for a federal building, it seemed, according to one critic, "fairly certain that Jean Drapeau played a key role in the expropriation of the Chinatown block."²¹ Despite community protests, the city expropriated residential and commercial tenants to clear six-acres for the federal building. Community hubs were destroyed including two Chinese churches, a school, several groceries, and arts and crafts stores. Furthermore, a food processing plant and Chinatown's main employer, Wong Wing Noodle Company, was forced to move in the process.²² High rents and further encroachment would continue to threaten and alter the district so that by the mid-1980s surveys revealed that the community had been considerably reduced.²³

As the city spearheaded plans for development – which pushed unwanted residents out and increased land value and tax generating businesses – residents, artists, and intellectuals started becoming more responsive to and critical of local politics. Among the clamour one intellectual stood out, Université de Montréal professor Melvin Charney. After sojourning in New York and Paris – where he improved his French and drew connections from different intellectual circles – Charney returned to Montreal in the mid-1960s to begin a career that would explore how art, urban identity, and history intersect. His activism, notably in Saint-Antoine district where he fought development and gentrification, was a testament to his profound belief

²¹ For over a quarter-century City Hall had been threatening to seize and demolish areas of Chinatown; first over owed taxes in 1942 and a decade later when it was looking for land for a new Radio-Canada edifice. *Ibid.*, 38.

²² Gabeline, Lanken, and Pope, *Montreal at the Crossroads*, 75-7.

²³ Kwok Bun Chan, "Ethnic Urban Space, Urban Displacement and Forced Relocation: The Case of Chinatown in Montreal," *Canadian Ethnic Studies / Études ethniques au Canada* vol. 18, no. 2 (1986): 68-70. Val M. Morrison, "Beyond Physical Boundaries: The Symbolic Construction of Chinatown," (M.A. thesis (Sociology) Concordia University, 1992), 73-5.

in social justice. Charney's strength rested in his ability to seamlessly interlock artistic, linguistic, and social spheres, which explains how he – an anglophone Jew of Polish and Russian heritage – became the driving force behind politically engaged artists at a moment when the art scene in Montreal was heavily shaped by Quebec nationalism.

Charney's ability to link different spheres was clearest when he coordinated art exhibitions. In 1972 he headed the popular art exhibition *Montreal, Plus or Minus?* at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (an institute that had been home to high culture). The exhibition brought together a heterogenous cohort of eighty artists, which included architects, social activists, community organizers, intellectuals, photographers, and students, with each articulating a discourse about what truly mattered in urban life: human-scale communities with adequate environments that are made up of green laneways and parks. It was presented to the public as a thoughtful reflection on the planning history of Montreal at a moment when dialogue about planning was lacking.²⁴ Thus, claimed Charney, the exhibition was a historical reflection on “large-scale” and “inhumane” economies of land development – a process that began with settler colonialism, gained momentum during the second industrial revolution, and reached its zenith during the postwar economic boom. “The real subject of the exhibition,” he writes in the exhibition catalogue, “is the relationship between the physical presence of the city and people's lives. The early destruction of Indian culture and the destruction of housing for the building of a super highway in 1972, the ‘housing crises’ and the profusion of high-rise apartments, violence and culture, are all interconnected in Montreal.”²⁵ Across the city automobiles had replaced pedestrians, pavement replaced greenery, and skyscrapers replaced housing units. Essentially,

²⁴ Jocelyne Lepage, “Melvin Charney: montréalais, québécois, et psychanalyste du bâtiment,” *La Presse*, 31 January 1987.

²⁵ Melvin Charney, *Montreal, plus or minus?* (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1972), 19.

Montreal, Plus or Minus? challenged the municipal administration's vision of Montreal by asking how space is produced, by whom, and for whom.

The exhibits extended beyond the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts too. Mauve, a feminist group, contested women's treatment as objects of commercial exploitation and brought attention to capitalist consumption through dance, mime, music, and street theatre in shopping centres across metropolitan Montreal.²⁶ Tom Shively designed "Caribbean of the North," a gargantuan geodesic dome à la Buckminster Fuller to cover the hills of Montreal's south shore for a greenhouse effect, and to recreate the tropical climate for winter vacationers to allow "Québec dollar\$ [to] be spent in Québec."²⁷ Like other grassroots protest campaigns of the period, this one brought activists who looked to make the kinds of changes and worlds that were once unimaginable.²⁸ Indeed, the artworks were meant to raise critical questions about development and destruction, inclusion and exclusion – fundamental issues that rebuked reformism and modernism. Most poignant of all, however, was the bus tour "Green Spaces." Its route presented sightseers with a not-so-picturesque tour of modernism and the remarkable ways that state projects had destroyed communities by displaying stretches of the Trans-Canada Highway in Little Burgundy and the Maison Radio-Canada in the Faubourg à M'lasse.²⁹

The exhibition, described by *Artscanada* as a "succès à scandale," divided critics.³⁰ During its eight-week run, *Montreal, Plus or Minus?* attracted 52,300 visitors, a commendable

²⁶ They performed at Alexis Nihon, Place Longueuil, Place Versailles, Côte des Neiges, Place Ville-Marie, and Frères Dupuis between June 15 and July 28. Mauve, "La femme et la ville," in *Montreal, plus or minus?*, 110-5. Michael White, "Museum of Fine Arts takes a hard look at Montreal," *Montreal Gazette*, 10 June 1972.

²⁷ Tom Shively, "Mer de Champlain," *Montreal, plus or minus?*, 115.

²⁸ Loo, *Moved by the State*, 182.

²⁹ Norman Pascoe, "'Underside' of city exposed by tours," *Montreal Star*, 15 July 1972; Lise Blais, "Excursions pour connaître l' 'autre métropole'," *La Presse*, 1 July 1972.

³⁰ Gary Michael Dault, "Montreal, plus or minus?: Melvin Charney on Montreal's Planning Woes," *Artscanada* no. 169/170/171 (Early Autumn 1972).

turnout for a summertime exhibition.³¹ But many who saw it could not understand its artistic value or merit, and one federal urban planning advisor even described it as “defeatist, fatalist – expressing a cul-de-sac in the view of the city’s future.”³² Art critic for *La Presse* Gilles Toupin held a divergent opinion, however. In his column he wrote that the exhibition’s timely political statement would certainly be seen as a turning point in Montreal history. And when he interviewed Charney, he asked whether this was part of the ongoing cultural *rattrapage* discourse overtaking the province. The artist rejected that premise, however, and instead asserted that it was a display of everyday living in Montreal. To this end, Charney conceded that holding the exhibition over a four-mile stretch across neighbourhoods or on a street would have been truer to this goal. Incidentally, that is exactly what he would do for *Corridart* in 1976. Astonishingly, Melvin’s clairvoyance extended further when he told Toupin that for *Montreal, Plus or Minus?* there had been “a few attempts at censorship, but I resisted.”³³ Ultimately, Charney’s work was a sincere attempt to renew critical debate on the topics of urban planning and modernism, which he did by examining how speculative development and city planning overlapped in Montreal. The questions he raised were part of a transnational moment of protest and challenge that characterized the era and to which municipal elected officials would have to respond.

* * *

In 1970 Montreal was selected to host the 1976 Olympic Games.³⁴ To build an Olympic Village that would accommodate four hundred thousand people per day, City Hall sequestered

³¹ The previous year’s exhibition had attracted 25,000 people. Michael White, “Montreal Plus Or Minus? The minus sign won the day,” *Montreal Gazette*, 2 September 1972.

³² Virginia Nixon, “Montreal Plus Or Minus? You make the choice,” *Montreal Gazette*, 17 June 1972. Michael White, “Montreal Plus Or Minus? The minus sign won the day,” *Montreal Gazette*, 2 September 1972.

³³ Gilles Toupin, “Si Montréal m’était contée,” *La Presse*, 17 June 1972.

³⁴ “Histoire administrative / Notice biographique,” E46 – Fonds Comité organisateur des Jeux olympiques de 1976, BAnQ.

parklands and displaced low-income tenants in the east end. Moreover, to meet the event's timetable the city favoured a "fast-track" construction, which enabled dangerous working conditions and led to a dozen worksite deaths.³⁵ While it is not this dissertation's goal to review how Montreal erected the site for the 1976 Olympic Games, I nevertheless want to note that out of this messy process emerged a coalition of more than a hundred community organizations, which added to the broader array of critiques contesting City Hall.³⁶ But perhaps the most stunning facet of the Olympic fiasco, however, concerned its source of funding. Montreal had set off without having secured federal or provincial funding, and since private capital would not fund the event, the city started grabbing money from public coffers with brazen confidence.³⁷ By May 1974, the city abolished public bidding for tenders when city council voted 42-4 to vest power in its executive committee, and it soon emerged that this had helped to further the private interests of engineers, contractors, and architects. As had been the case during the 1950s, explosive headlines claimed that collusion and corruption swamped City Hall.³⁸

Date	Total cost forecast (CAD)	Increase relative to initial forecast
4 December 1969	\$120,000,000	--
23 November 1972	\$310,000,000	258%
26 April 1974	\$309,505,100	257.9%
4 February 1975	\$610,600,000	509%
16 July 1975	\$730,000,000	608%
1 August 1976	final cost: \$1,333,028,000	1,111%

Source: *Albert Malouf, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Cost of the 21st Olympiad vol. 1 (Montreal: April 1980), 24-7. The "final cost" does not account for completion of the Olympic stadium, which remained unfinished during the Olympic Games; it also does not account for \$176 million of Olympic activities outside of Montreal. That amount was paid for by the governments of Ontario, Canada, and Quebec as well as several municipal administrations.*

³⁵ Sophy Chan and Janice Forsyth, "Welcome to the Olympic Victims Hotel": Homelessness and the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games," *Sport in Society*, vol. 21, no. 3 (2018): 468-81; Clément, "The Transformation of Security Planning for the Olympics," 28. Auf der Maur, *The billion-dollar game*, 132.

³⁶ George Wright, "The Political Economy of the Montreal Olympic Games," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* vol. 2, no. 1 (1978): 17. Marsan, *Montreal in Evolution*, 390-1. Sancton, "Montreal," 83.

³⁷ Roy MacGregor, "Drapeau's Great Games," *Maclean's*, 1 February 1975. For a comprehensive rundown of how this all tied back to the mayor's office see Auf der Maur, *The billion-dollar game*.

³⁸ "COJO-ABC : Snyder dément toute collusion," *Le Soleil*, 12 January 1974. Gérald Godin, "Corruption à la ville de Montréal: le cas Snyder," *Québec-Presse*, 26 May 1974.

In early 1973 the Quebec government intervened and appointed a joint committee for the review and control of revenues and expenses related to the Olympic Games. Meanwhile the federal government gave an important nod of approval on 23 July 1973 when it authorized the printing of Olympic coins and stamps to help finance it. It also coordinated an “Olympic Lottery” – a haphazard bid to pay for the soaring cost of the Olympics. From the very beginning, however, the federal government made it clear that it would not contribute to a deficit if one were to occur, and although it allocated \$260 million dollars to fund the games, the likelihood of a deficit increased over time.³⁹ Later, a planning consultant would claim that the profits derived from the sale of coins, stamps, commercial licences, and lottery tickets were beneficial but that local labour disputes, inflation, and the oil crisis of 1973 constricted spending power.⁴⁰ By November 1975 the skyrocketing cost, the lack of proper administrative control, and the delay in carrying out the work forced the Quebec Government to intervene. It entrusted itself with the ownership of the Olympic facilities and the responsibility for continuing its construction under the Olympic Installation Board [Régie des installations olympiques (RIO)].⁴¹

A couple of years after the Olympics had come and gone, the Quebec government would order an inquiry into the cost of the Olympic Games. The Malouf report, presented in 1980, offered six main reasons why its cost had drifted so far from the initial forecast: administrative irresponsibility, poor fiscal planning, lack of a masterplan, acquisition of lavish and superfluous installations, architectural difficulties, and the choice of French architect Roger Taillibert who,

³⁹ Albert Malouf, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Cost of the 21st Olympiad vol. 2* (Montreal: April 1980), 78; “Histoire administrative / Notice biographique,” E46 – Fonds Comité organisateur des Jeux olympiques de 1976, BAnQ.

⁴⁰ Paul Charles Howell, *The Montreal Olympics: An Insider’s View of Organizing a Self-financing Games* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008), 5.

⁴¹ Malouf, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry*, 8-9.

not only held a patronizing attitude toward Quebec professionals and labourers that worked on his projects, but refused to revise his blueprints in order to save costs.⁴²

When the Quebec Government created RIO in November 1975 it seized control of more than the Olympics. It effectively terminated Mayor Drapeau's vision for the city's greatest event and made it clear that he was not the city's sole authority. In an interview decades later, Melvin Charney argued that when Drapeau lost power over his city he had been incensed and vindictive, and that was why he would do anything to show, once and for all, who ruled in Montreal.⁴³ In the midst of corruption and fraud, the essence of which made its way into newspapers across the globe, everything fell into place for a cruel cleanup campaign beginning in November 1975.



Figure 16: Five-foot, six-inch Drapeau stands inside the leviathan created by Roger Taillibert, its dome appearing like a halo hanging above the mayor's head. Graham Bezan, "Mayor Jean Drapeau," *Toronto Star*, 7 July 1976. *Toronto Star Archives, Baldwin Collection of Canadiana, Toronto Reference Library.*

⁴² The inquiry focused exclusively on the period from 1969 to 1976. Malouf, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry*, 31-7; Marsan, *Montreal in Evolution*, 394.

⁴³ Nathalie Petrowski, "Rencontre avec Melvin Charney: La mémoire de Corridart," *La Presse*, 12 June 2000.

Pre-Olympics Raids

*Sometimes it takes vicious repression to make people fight back.*⁴⁴
– *The Body Politic* (1976)

As we have seen in earlier chapters, nightclubs, brothels, bars, and cabarets attracted great crowds and generated a lot of capital during the early- to mid-twentieth century. But following the election of Jean Drapeau in 1954, and in the leadup to Expo 67, the city completely transformed this night scene. Authorities clamped down on the sites that gave Montreal its so-called immoral and disreputable character, and this paved the way for a greater integration of the nighttime economy into the formal economy. Because the struggle over acceptable behaviour was an ongoing battle, however, municipal authorities continued to police sex during the 1970s. And although municipal authorities had been policing gay sex since at least the first Canadian law condemning homosexuality in 1841, the process through which they did so evolved – especially after the decriminalization of certain sexual practices between consenting adults in 1969 (federal Omnibus Bill C-150).⁴⁵ Therefore, in the leadup to the 1976 Olympic Games, authorities considered different ways to crackdown on businesses that advertised queer-friendly storefronts and where people continued to resist heterosexual dominance, like bookstores, cinemas, bars, discotheques, and taverns.⁴⁶ Throughout this period police raids were conducted under the broad bawdy-house legislation, which legally defined any place that is kept, occupied, or resorted to by one or more persons for the purpose of prostitution

⁴⁴ “Olympic Crackdown,” *The Body Politic*, August 1976.

Upon reviewing queer activism during the 1970s Ron Dayman wrote: “Ironiquement, en cherchant l’appui de son public et en se vantant de ses exploits par une couverture grossière, la police a plutôt réussi à écœurer assez de gais pour les pousser à réagir.” *Le Berdache* (May 1981): 51. Le collectif de l’ADGQ, “Editorial,” *Le Berdache* (May 1981): 3.

⁴⁵ Tom Hooper, “Queering ’69: The Recriminalization of Homosexuality in Canada,” *Canadian Historical Review* vol. 100, no. 2 (June 2019): 257-73.

⁴⁶ Dominic Dagenais, *Grossières indécentes: Pratiques et identités homosexuelles à Montréal, 1880-1929* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2020), 110. Jocelyn M. Guindon, “La contestation des espaces gais au centre-ville de Montréal depuis 1950,” (PhD diss. (Geography), McGill University, 2001), 119-20. Jason B. Crawford, “Forgetting Montreal’s Gay Downtown: The Popular Gay Geographic Imagination and a Mish-mash History of the Present,” *Québec Studies* vol. 61, issue 1 (2016): 165-86.

or the practice of acts of indecency. Using the legislation's vague terms "acts of indecency" or "indecent acts," police emphasized the city's power over downtown to recast it into a "tourist-friendly" economic space.

In North American cities gay activism had been growing throughout the late-1960s and early-1970s.⁴⁷ For Montreal's gay community, part of this activism was informed and propelled by intellectual developments that blurred the boundaries between art, politics, music, and sexuality – noticeable in art and counterculture journals like *Sexus* and *Mainmise*. In fact, the Montreal-based Front de libération homosexuel (FLH) was founded in 1971 by members of *Mainmise*'s editorial team who were disillusioned by the commodification of gay (night)life. However, the FLH's activities ended when police raided its office and arrested sixty individuals late one night.⁴⁸ The raid forced the FLH to dissolve, but out of it emerged other queer liberation groups like Gay McGill and COOP Femmes. Gay McGill became a successful activist hub that generated funds by hosting monthly dances, which attracted thousands of people to the university's campus – some from as far away as San Francisco.⁴⁹ Members of Gay McGill founded Androgyne, a downtown bookstore stocked with feminist and queer literature, and also established the lesbian periodical *Long Time Coming* (1973-6).⁵⁰ The francophone lesbian group COOP Femmes also held dances to raise awareness about issues like abortion, daycare, employment, and the struggle for gay rights.⁵¹

⁴⁷ For a comprehensive overview see Ross Higgins, *De la clandestinité à l'affirmation : Pour une histoire de la communauté gaie montréalaise* (Montreal: Comeau & Nadeau, 1999). Also see Manon Tremblay, ed., *Queer Mobilizations: Social Movement Activism and Canadian Public Policy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016). Korinek, *Prairie Fairies*.

⁴⁸ For more on *Mainmise* and *Sexus* see Yves Robillard, *Quebec Underground 1962-1972 – Tome: 2* (Montreal: les éditions médiart, 1973). Higgins, *De la clandestinité à l'affirmation*, 113.

⁴⁹ "No liquor: McGill dance cancelled," *Gay Times*, May 1975. Guindon, "La contestation des espaces gais," 163-4.

⁵⁰ Ron Dayman, "Les anglophones gais s'organisent," *Le Berdache* (May 1981): 49.

⁵¹ Andrea Hildebran, "Genèse d'une communauté lesbienne: un récit des années 1970," in *Sortir de l'ombre*, 207-33.

The pre-Olympic cleanup was an effort that combined modern political and capitalist interests to make community hubs – such as the ones described above – invisible. According to *Gay Times*, a source close to the city’s Police Department revealed that “there [was] indeed a master plan to clean up the city prior to the Olympics,” and this forceful initiative started eighteen months before the start of the Olympics when police officers busted into Aquarius sauna on 4 February 1975.⁵² During that raid officers charged thirty-five men with being “found-ins in a bawdy-house” and, later, these officers testified that sex acts were encouraged by the establishment because it sold gay magazines and lubricants. As the principal body governing bawdy house economies, police used their discretion in whether or not to use bawdy house laws, and in so doing drew on a long history of selective enforcement. Throughout this period, the police struck at the heart of the city’s queer community, a space that had been providing comfort, empowerment, and where members could develop their sexuality based on a shared search for pleasure and excitement. While Aquarius remained opened for business, an arsonist destroyed it two months later, a tragedy that killed three people.⁵³

By spring 1975 community members formed a Marxist organization called the Groupe Homosexuel d’Action Politique (GHAP).⁵⁴ GHAP communicated important community updates by circulating its bulletin and leaflets in gay nightspots and at dances organized by Gay Montreal. At times, when it did not have enough funds to print a bulletin, members relayed important messages by word of mouth or by etching graffiti inside bars and discotheques.⁵⁵ GHAP was committed to social justice and articulated its worldview in opposition to capitalism, racism, and patriarchy; it stood against patriarchy at the International Women’s Day night walk

⁵² “Aquarius raid start of police anti-gay clean-up campaign,” *Gay Times*, April 1975.

⁵³ Russell, “The Offence of Keeping a Common Bawdy-House,” 298.

⁵⁴ For a detailed account of the group’s short-lived history see Roger Noël, “Pratiques politiques et formation de l’identité gaie au Québec : L’expérience du Groupe Homosexuel d’action politique (1975-1976),” (M.A. thesis (Political Science), Université du Québec à Montréal, 1993).

⁵⁵ Madeleine Daoust, “Les Femmes,” in *Guide de Montréal*, 278.

and it stood against capitalism at the May Day protest.⁵⁶ GHAP believed that the city's nighttime scene remained the last utopia for queer Montrealers, which is why it pushed for gay liberation literature to be sold in bars, nightclubs, and bathhouses.⁵⁷ Ultimately, community organization and activism emerged at night and because of the repressive pre-Olympic crackdown.

Nighttime raids, however, began intensifying as the mayor's command over the Olympics slipped away. In late-1975 several well-established queer spots were raided, including Baby Face, named after its owner and ex-wrestler Denise Cassidy, and the legendary disco-hub Lime Light, Montreal's largest discotheque where one of its three dance floors catered exclusively to a gay clientele. During these raids officers feigned routine checks for underage drinkers and drugs.⁵⁸ Similar raids rocked Rocambole, P.J.'s, Buds, and Taureau d'Or. In January 1976 the Montreal Club Baths franchise was raided by police and thirteen individuals were arrested as found-ins in a bawdy-house. Since its opening Club Baths had been having problems with municipal authorities in getting its license approved, and the raid was seen as part of a "continuing campaign of police harassment of Montreal gay establishments [in] an attempt to clean up before this summer's Olympic games."⁵⁹ "The repression accompanying the Olympics preparation in Montreal has caused some dislocation and demoralization," lamented a columnist in the queer magazine *The Body Politic*.⁶⁰ Authorities made it clear that

⁵⁶ "Position du Groupe homosexuel d'action politique," S2, D1, Dossier de Danny Frankel, F0001, GHAP, AGQ. "Gays join May Day marchers," *Gay Times*, May 1975.

⁵⁷ "Contributions to the discussions at the National Gay Conference 1975," presented by the Revolutionary Marxist Group (Canada) and the Groupe Marxiste Revolutionnaire (Québec), June 25, 1975, Dossier de Mark Wilson, Pièces 17-26, F0001, Fonds GHAP, AGQ.

⁵⁸ *Lime Light* was raided on 17 October and 7 November and *Baby Face* on Halloween. "On est tanné de se faire écœurer et il est plus que temps de s'organiser," Dossier de Mark Wilson, pièces 1, 01-16, F0001, GHAP, AGQ. For more on *Baby Face* see Line Chamberland, "Remembering Lesbian Bars: Montreal, 1955-1975," *Journal of Homosexuality* vol. 25, no. 3 (1993): 231-69.

⁵⁹ Ron Dayman, "Olympics clean-up strikes again," *The Body Politic*, April 1976.

⁶⁰ John Blacklock, "Olympics Circus Brings More Repression," *The Body Politic*, April 1976.

“nonconforming elements” had to be driven further underground, not only in Montreal but at Olympic sites peppered between Quebec City and Toronto too.⁶¹

But Montreal’s pre-Olympic raids took a forceful and dramatic turn over the course of a weekend in mid-May 1976. At Neptune Sauna the police arrested eighty-nine men during a late-night raid when officers smashed down doors and busted into the sauna equipped with axes and crowbars.⁶² Police told Neptune’s management that they “were cleaning things up,” which evoked a clear link between heteronormativity and cleanliness. Furthermore, police also conflated homosexuality to violence by suggesting that raids at gay establishments could help turn-in “potential terrorists.”⁶³ Speaking to the *Montreal Gazette* Henri Labelle – a gay-nightclub-manager and, later, a Concordia University lecturer – suggested that many well-known Montrealers frequented Neptune, including a former mayor’s son, a government minister, a secretary to the Catholic archbishop, and a couple of off-duty police officers. On the night of the police raid, however, each had been able to elude police by dashing out the back door.⁶⁴ In the context of this research the revelation, whether true or not, matters little. What Labelle’s story does suggest, however, is that there is truth behind the “nocturnal self” and the common maxim that queer folk lived two lives: “Gay from nine in the evening until five in the

⁶¹ The Olympic Games involved 26 venues spaced over several cities – including but not limited to, sailing in Kingston, football in Ottawa and Toronto, and Handball in Sherbrooke and Quebec City – each of which was subject to surveillance. Clément, “The Transformation of Security Planning for the Olympics,” 32. See *Games of the XXI Olympiad, Montréal, 1976, competition sites*, COJO, 1975-1976, BAnQ; “Olympic Crackdown,” *The Body Politic*, August 1976.

⁶² They charged eighty-five as found-ins and the four bath’s directors as “keepers of a bawdy-house.” Ron Dayman, “Le CHAR ou l’année gai 1976,” *Le Berdache* (May 1980): 50.

⁶³ “The Police and the Press,” *The Body Politic*, August 1976. Kinsman and Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers*, 311.

⁶⁴ It is quite possible that Neptune, like numerous other gay spaces in Montreal, was designed as a labyrinth of darkness with barriers to evade police raids. Olivier Vallerand, “An Open Window on Other Masculinities: Gay Bars and Visibility in Montreal,” in *Making Men, Making History: Canadian Masculinities Across Time and Place*, ed. Peter Gossage and Robert Rutherford (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018), 151.

morning and straight the rest of the time.”⁶⁵ Meals, breakfast or dinner, eased the transition from one world to the other.

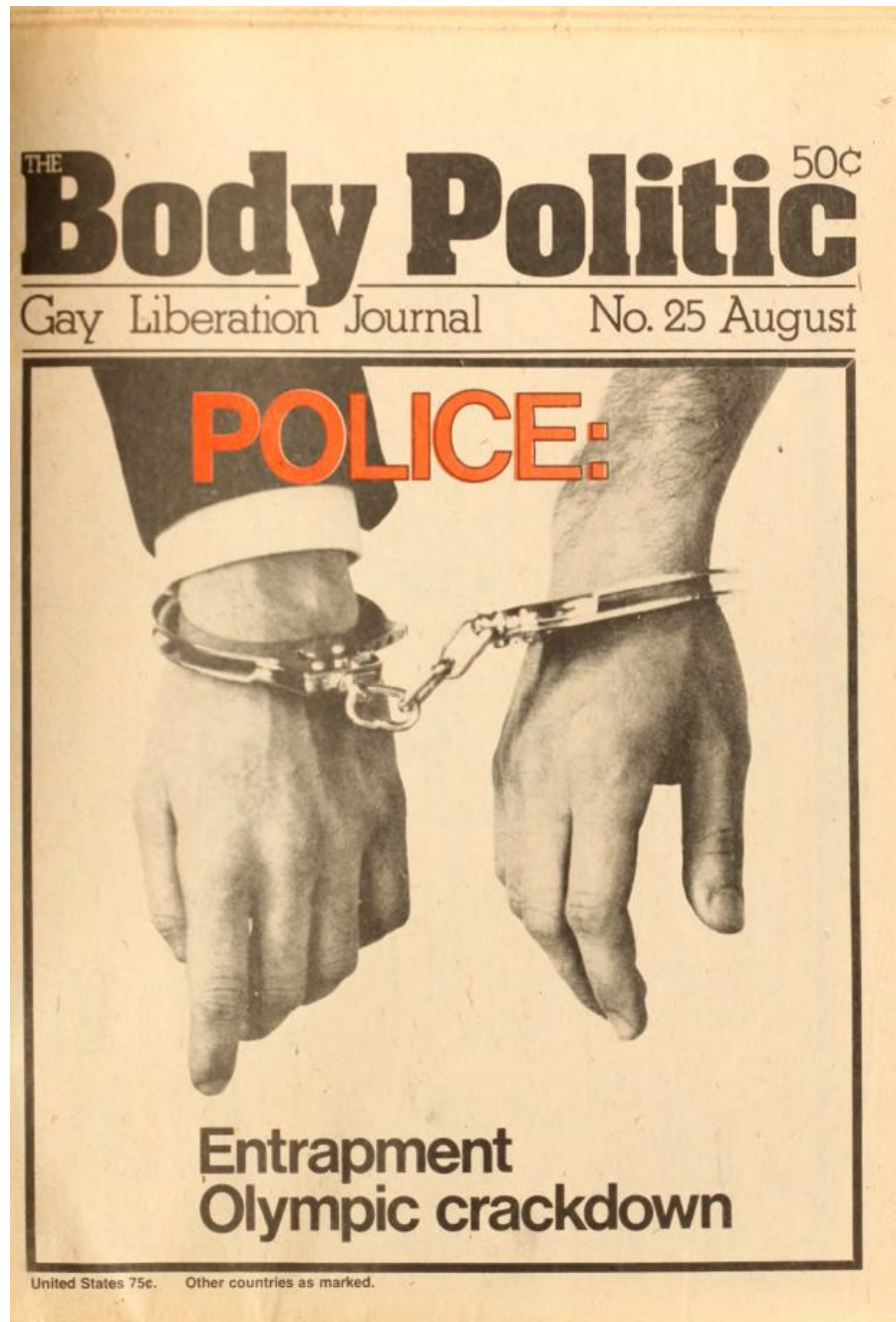


Figure 17: “Police: Entrapment Olympic Crackdown,” *The Body Politic*, August 1976.

As activist Ross Higgins notes, linguistic division had up to this point segregated queer activism in Montreal.⁶⁶ However, the crackdowns on nightlife – adding up to hundreds of raids

⁶⁵ Fitzgerald, “What police raid means to homosexuals,” *Montreal Gazette*, 17 November 1977. Korinek, *Prairie Fairies*, 23.

⁶⁶ Ross Higgins, “Pour une histoire gaie de Montréal,” *Sortir* (April 1983): 7.

and arrests – had created the perfect climate for the creation of the bilingual Comité homosexuel anti-répression (CHAR) on 20 May 1976.⁶⁷ Its creation came on the heels of police raids at Stork Club, Studio One, and Jilly's – at the latter officers had barged into the Bishop Street lesbian bar in a swat-like manoeuvre armed with rifles and cameras.⁶⁸ The moment was ripe for action and two hundred people attended an assembly organized to denounce ongoing raids and sexual repression. But community pushback reached an unprecedented height one month later when three hundred CHAR supporters held the largest gay rights demonstration in Canadian history. Supporters marched through the city, and since the procession made its way past the Montreal office of the Quebec premier, COJO's headquarters, and City Hall, it connected the pre-Olympic crackdown to urban and provincial political interests. For thousands, the violence of the pre-Olympic Games "cleanup" typified the rawness of urban modernism.

Throughout this period authorities also profiled Black individuals disproportionately. Racial profiling also took place at night near bars and hotels where authorities thought tourists would go. Most of this was the work of police station 10. In the 1973 NFB documentary *Station 10* – which showed how the station's officers dealt with a wide array of disturbances and crimes – we see how officers used race and nationality to chase leads and search premises.⁶⁹ A few years later this same station was tasked with the pre-Olympic cleanup campaign. As the Olympic Games approached, the station's officers began clearing the streets of Black sex workers using the city's anti-loitering bylaw 333, and it also called into action immigration officers to deport those who were arrested. A police spokesperson claimed that the raid on street-based sex workers had allowed the department to foil an attempt by the "Black American

⁶⁷ Stories about the pre-Olympic crackdown reached international audiences and garnered solidarity from groups from across the Commonwealth, New York, and Denmark. "Police repression: a national struggle," *NGRC Forum* vol. 1, no. 2, (Summer 1976). Alain Bouchard, "Le milieu gai à Montréal," in *Guide de Montréal*, 244-5.

⁶⁸ *Jilly's* was a dimly lit discotheque whose crowd was mostly francophone. Daoust, "Les Femmes," 279. "The Police and the Press," *The Body Politic*, August 1976.

⁶⁹ Michael Scott (dir.), *Station 10* (Montreal: National Film Board, 1973).

mafia” to set a satellite operation near downtown nightclubs. Over the course of a few days police arrested fifty individuals and deported eighteen women. In fact, during the Olympic Games police would arrest eighteen more Black American sex workers near the Olympic Village and, after being handed over to immigration officers, they were deported too.⁷⁰ Speaking to the tabloid *Le Petit Journal*, an officer said that they coordinated with immigration officers because the “municipal bylaw was no longer enough” to contain the influx of sex workers.⁷¹ Effectively, the officer revealed that the authorities’ goal was not simply to clear streets – since this could be achieved with bylaw 333 – but to completely eradicate sex work from the city in order to maintain a “clean” image. This collaborative effort, which brought into relief politics of race and immigration, led to 748 arrests under the guise of prostitution-related offences in 1975.⁷²

During the Olympics, the world witnessed the largest Canadian military operation since the Second World War.⁷³ “Security” was first budgeted in 1973 as a mere \$500,000 expenditure, but its price tag followed the way of the rest of the 1976 Summer Olympics and ultimately cost organizers an estimated \$100 million, with many additional expenditures assumed by the contributing agencies.⁷⁴ The Olympic Village itself was protected by a ten-foot barbed wire fence and patrolled, like other parts of the city, with armed officials. Fondly remembering the Montreal Games and all its contradictions, sports and public policy historian Bruce Kidd notes

⁷⁰ Most of those arrested were from New York, Buffalo, and Washington and worked from hotels and tourist rooms. “Les prostituées font des jeux ... une affaire d’or,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 22 July 1976.

⁷¹ “Des noirs de New York tentent de s’accaparer de la prostitution à Montréal,” *Le Petit Journal*, 31 August 1975.

⁷² “Pour préserver l’image de Montréal pendant les Jeux Olympiques la police déclare la guerre à la prostitution,” *La patrie*, 1 February 1976.

⁷³ This operation included 8940 Canadian soldiers guarding the Olympic venues, hotels, and transportation hubs in Montreal and the satellite cities of Bromont, Kingston and Toronto. They worked in close coordination with 1376 officers of the RCMP, 1140 from the Sûreté du Québec, 533 from the Ontario Provincial Police, 1606 from Montreal Police, 424 from four other municipal police services, and 2910 private security guards. Kidd, “The Army’s Presence Will Be Obvious,” 162.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

that the strategy behind the conspicuous display of force was to safeguard the success of the Olympic Games, especially in the wake of the Munich tragedy and similar acts of terrorism around the world. Perhaps this fierce exhibition of military power was worthwhile since the Official Report for the Games cites only three “breaches of security” – a Canadian athlete smuggled a friend into the Olympic Village, a journalist succeeded in meeting Queen Elizabeth II, and a spectator jumped over the barrier to join Bruce Jenner’s victory lap.⁷⁵ Although surveillance and security was for the benefit of the athletes, many participants and Montrealers reported being troubled by the heavy-handed display during the two-week event. And despite heavy police and military presence *Le Petit Journal* claimed that the Olympic Games had been “a goldmine for prostitutes and pick-pocketers”:

Since mid-July [1976], business has been good for prostitutes and pickpockets in Montreal. As with every major event of international significance, a whole fauna of pickpockets and public courtesans descended on the metropolis. If crime dropped significantly, it was because of the presence of so many police officers and armed soldiers on our streets and around the Olympic complex in the east end of the city. Nevertheless, criminals continued their clandestine activities.⁷⁶

After the event, and throughout the summer of 1976, queer community organizers shared legal information to cope with the outcome of the police raids. They did so by printing and distributing pamphlets in bars and nightclubs.⁷⁷ If it had not been clear to clients beforehand, the distribution of pamphlets rendered nightclubs and bars into activist spaces. As Marie-Claire Blais writes in *The Nights in the Underground*, a whole network of relationships is made possible in bars, where students, labourers, lovers, and transients find a welcoming home. Nevertheless, by the end of the decade many community members started to question the value of bars as “home-space,” and began to seek alternate spaces – a development that was made

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁷⁶ “Grâce aux jeux olympiques les prostituées et les pickpockets ont fait des affaires d’or,” *Le Petit Journal*, 1 August 1976. See also Michel Auger, “Les crimes graves à la baisse pendant les jeux,” *La Presse*, 21 July 1976.

⁷⁷ *The Body Politic*, “Olympic Crackdown,” August 1976.

even more urgent because of violent police raids.⁷⁸ It was an argument made by the FLH and one that Pierre Vallières would echo in *Le Berdache* a few years later: “Many gays are sick of disco music and we want to create and innovate, under less stereotypical conditions, an uncommercialized queer culture.”⁷⁹ CHAR’s activism paved the way for the creation of the Association pour les droits des gai(e)s du Québec (ADGQ) in October 1976, which quickly became the main entity fighting for gay rights in Quebec. In fact, the ADGQ’s raison d’être was to have the Quebec government amend section 10 of the Human Rights Charter and prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.⁸⁰ Over the following months the group made use of the city’s extensive nocturnal network by organizing dances. Eventually they also began handing-out *Le Berdache* – a journal founded in 1979 that drew inspiration from Indigenous culture and attempted to decolonize Montreal’s queer settler community.⁸¹

Post-Olympic and Truxx

– À BAS LA DRAPOLICE⁸²
Comité de communication de L’ADGQ (1977)

Repressive tactics by the city’s police officers continued long after the Olympics. In the summer months of 1977 officers patrolled known gay hangouts, notably La Fontaine Park, where they harassed, terrorized, and assaulted individuals and, in certain cases, brought men into dimly lit parking lots for vicious beatings. In a letter sent to elected officials, media outlets, civil rights groups, and police officials, the ADGQ argued that these events only occurred at

⁷⁸ An advertisement for a new discussion group suggests this ideological rupture: “Les Féministes lesbiennes de Montréal est un groupe de récemment formé qui s’est donné pour tâche de permettre aux lesbiennes de se rencontrer ailleurs que dans les clubs [...]” “Communiqué,” *Les Têtes de pioche*, June 1977 in *Les Têtes de pioche [Journal des femmes]* (Montreal: Éditions du Remue-ménage, 1980).

⁷⁹ Pierre Vallières, “Chronique,” *Le Berdache* (May 1981): 31.

⁸⁰ See Ron Dayman’s correspondence with Simone Chartrand (24 April 1977). 24P-630 : 23/4, Fonds d’archives de la ligue des droits et libertés, Archives UQÀM.

⁸¹ See Guy Ménard, “Du berdache au Berdache: lectures de l’homosexualité dans la culture québécoise,” *Anthropologie et Sociétés*, vol. 9, no. 3 (1985): 115-38. Sivry, “Traces militantes éphémères,” 236.

⁸² *Gai(e)s du Québec*, vol. 1, no. 5 (November 1977). Fonds d’archives de la Ligue des droits et libertés (LDL), 24P-630 : 23/2, Archives UQÀM.

night and were, in all likelihood, the work of a night patrol unit.⁸³ In a 1975 article published by *La Presse*, a reporter mentioned that city police's night patrol was formed by about thirty detectives who were dressed as civilians and cruised the streets in unmarked cars.⁸⁴ These would have been the same officers who raided discotheques and characterized the pervasiveness of homophobia within the Police Department.⁸⁵ Despite public outcry police repression continued during the following months. On 19 October 1977, police raided the Dominion Square Tavern downtown and arrested twenty-two men on charges of being found-ins. This escalation set the groundwork for the raid at Truxx (1426 Stanley Street), the most infamous bar raid of the period.⁸⁶

On a Friday night, sometime between 21 and 22 October 1977, 155 queer men and women were arrested at Truxx, 145 of whom were charged as found-ins in a bawdy-house, eight with gross indecency, and two with drug possession.⁸⁷ Numerous men described the nightmarish events that unfolded.⁸⁸ Some had been sitting, drinking, or dancing and others were cruising with undercover agents who feigned sexual interest. Suddenly, lights flooded Truxx and illuminated a pathway for uniformed officers who sported bulletproof vests and wielded machine-guns and rifles. A police source told the *Montreal Gazette* that protocols had been followed by officers: "It's standard policy for police to come equipped with machineguns and

⁸³ 24P-630 : 23/4 Discrimination pour orientation sexuelle, Fonds d'archives de la ligue des droits et libertés, Archives UQÀM.

⁸⁴ "Il y a patrouille de nuit et patrouille nocturne," *La Presse*, 1 April, 1975.

⁸⁵ See "Eille, les flics, fichez-nous la paix," *Gai(e)s du Québec*, August 1977. "La répression policière nous frappe," *Gai(e)s du Québec*, September 1977.

⁸⁶ Higgins, *De la clandestinité à l'affirmation*, 129.

⁸⁷ Bertrand Desjardins and Claude De Cotret, "Super-descente chez les homos," *Le Journal de Montréal*, 23 October 1977. Roger Drouin, "Pourquoi s'archarner contre les homos...?," *Le Journal de Montréal*, 24 October 1977.

⁸⁸ "Communiqué de presse," folder D4, F0129, Comité de défense des accusés du Truxx, AGQ. Association pour les droits des gai(e)s du Québec, "Communiqué : ADGQ statement to October 26, 1977 Press Conference," Folder D1, F0129, Comité de défense des accusés du Truxx, AGQ.

bullet-proof vests during major raids.”⁸⁹ The armed officers hurled insults and drew weapons toward the clients and staff. They arrested scores of men and in the process bruised, shoved, frisked, and intimidated.⁹⁰ Montreal police offered two reasons for the militarized raid. In one version it claimed to have been acting on a tip that Truxx’s dance floor had been used as a playground for gay sex. In another, it told a *Montreal Gazette* reporter that the goal was to stamp-out the “epedemic [*sic*] of armed robberies committed by homosexuals.”⁹¹ Later, officers recalled the “indecent acts” they had witnessed, which amounted to hugging, kissing, and groping at the bar and on the dance floor. In the washroom they allegedly saw men masturbating and, occasionally, performing sexual acts.⁹² Either way, the raid pointed to the department’s new proficiency with militarized equipment.

Those arrested during the *Truxx* raid were detained for fifteen hours and were forced to undergo a sexually transmitted infection test, a cavity search, and a blood test as a condition of their release.⁹³ It was the largest police assault on gays since the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1969 and the largest mass arrest in Quebec since the 1970 October Crisis. *The Body Politic* reviewed the legal framework that allowed police to charge individuals under bawdy-house laws:

According to section 179(1)(b) of the Criminal Code, a “common bawdy house” is defined as a public place resorted to “for the purposes of prostitution or the practice of acts of indecency.”

Since the bar’s owner, Mr Salvagio [*sic*], decided to plead not guilty to the charges of keeping a “bawdy house,” the burden of proof rested with the city of Montreal. The Court had

⁸⁹ Lévesque, “Du Truxx au poste de Police,” 38. Joel Ruimy, “Homosexuals fighting back after raid,” *Montreal Gazette*, 27 October 1977.

⁹⁰ Ghislain Lévesque, “Du Truxx au poste de Police,” in *Sortir*, ed. Luc Benoît and Marie-Andrée Bertrand (Montreal: Éditions de l’Aurore, 1978), 33-40. B. Desjardins, “1,500 homosexuels se déchainent!,” *Journal de Montréal*, 24 October 1977. Joel Ruimy, “Homosexuals fighting back after raid,” *Montreal Gazette*, 27 October 1977.

⁹¹ Christopher Bain and Steve Kowch, “City Homosexuals protest police machine-gun raid,” *Montreal Gazette*, 24 October 1977.

⁹² Russell, “The Offence of Keeping a Common Bawdy-House,” 303.

⁹³ “Press Release,” 3 November 1977, Folder D4, F0129, Comité de défense des accusés du Truxx, AGQ. Roger Drouin, “Un homo indigné,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 24 October 1977. For a fictionalized account of the event see the script for the musical by Paul Ledoux and Terry Last, *The Night They Raided Truxx* (Halifax: The Dramatists’ Co-op of Nova Scotia, 1979).

already heard the corroborating testimony of the five morality squad officers involved in the raid, and their precise and circumstantial statements seemed to justify the merits of the charge.

In fact, during ten days preceding the raid, plainclothes officers observed activities inside the bar. The numerous allegations of “gross indecency” and “Indecent acts”—which were described at great length and in minute detail—constitute the basis of the proof of the charge.⁹⁴

The ADGQ held an emergency meeting on the afternoon following the dramatic raid.⁹⁵ It concluded that a quick and energetic response from the community was necessary, which is why it organized a spontaneous nighttime protest. At midnight, at the intersection of Sainte-Catherine and Stanley Streets – the same site where crowds amassed during the so-called Night of Terror in 1969 – protestors slowly trickled into the street. What started as a timid response quickly turned into the largest gay protest in Canadian history, supplanting the march that was held on 19 June 1976.⁹⁶ Two thousand protestors came together to create an atmosphere that, according to reporters, was reminiscent of 1960s-era protests. Moreover, the power of place and location was made clear that evening as organizers reaffirmed the queer community’s rootedness downtown.⁹⁷ However, despite the demonstration’s peaceful procession officers from the Morality Squad and anti-riot unit reaffirmed their power when they charged at the crowd with unexpected force.

Perhaps counterintuitively, the atmosphere of repression and anti-queer violence convinced closeted individuals to come out in support of gay rights.⁹⁸ “The police did us an enormous favor,” stated ADGQ president Claude Beaulieu: “We’ve been swamped with calls from people who never had any interest in gay organizations before [...] Now, they’re prepared to take a stand.” One Montreal businessman confirmed: “I am a citizen of this country. I pay my

⁹⁴ Stuart Russell, “‘Bawdy house’ or not? Truxx trials being,” *The Body Politic*, June-July 1978.

⁹⁵ “ADGQ Statement to October 26, 1977 (Press conference),” 27 October 1977, Folder D1, F0129, Comité de défense des accusés du Truxx, AGQ.

⁹⁶ Sivry, “Traces militantes éphémères,” 244-5.

⁹⁷ “Les homos et la police: C’EST LA GUERRE,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 24 October 1977. “Il n’y a pas eu de violence, clame la police,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 24 October 1977.

⁹⁸ Joel Ruimy, “Homosexuals fighting back after raid,” *Montreal Gazette*, 27 October 1977.

taxes and I have never considered myself a militant of any sort. But because I am gay, I can no longer sit idly by and watch the police arrest innocent people. I'm mad.”⁹⁹ While anti-repression work was being done at night, the issues progressively became mainstream. Gay representation increased in popular culture, which helped raise awareness for gay rights advocacy. On 27 October, a week after the Truxx raid, the ADGQ met with the Commission des droits de la personne and submitted a twenty-page document outlining the organization's demands for reforms to the 1975 Quebec Charter of Human Rights. The following day Baby Face owner Denise Cassidy wrote to LDL secretary Norman Caron requesting the organization's support for “sexual orientation” amendments to the Charter.¹⁰⁰ The adoption of the Charter had helped redefine the norms of social inclusion, but the recent protests and activism forced the Parti Québécois to modify section 10 of the Charter. Bill 88, which the party introduced and supported unanimously, prohibited anti-gay discrimination when it came to housing, employment, and access to public space.¹⁰¹

On 18 March 1978 the Comité de défense des accusés du Truxx (CDAT) held a dance at UQÀM, where it celebrated the community's recent legal victory but, at the same time, used the event to raise funds for the ongoing trial.¹⁰² The CDAT used the dance floor to form alliances and integrate political activism into nightlife.¹⁰³ The legal battle was but one of the multifaceted

⁹⁹ John Fitzgerald, “What police raid means to homosexuals,” *Montreal Gazette*, 17 November 1977.

¹⁰⁰ 24P-630 : 23/4; *Gai(e)s du Québec*, vol. 1, no. 5 (November 1977). 24P-630 : 23/2, Fonds d'archives de la Ligue des droits et libertés (LDL), Archives UQÀM.

¹⁰¹ For a full summary of the events leading to the ascension of Bill 88 see *Gai(e)s du Québec*, 1 February 1978. See also *Journal des débats de l'Assemblée nationale*, 7 and 15 December 1977, Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée nationale du Québec.

¹⁰² They were able to raise \$2,775, and, a few months later, “The Night they Raided Truxx,” by Paul Ledoux debuted and displayed the events leading a group of revellers to become embroiled in activism. “Dans-bénéfice du 18 mars 1978 Pour la défense des accusés du Truxx,” Folder D6, F0129, Comité de défense des accusés du Truxx, AGQ.

¹⁰³ “Tous et toutes à la danse du 18 mars!,” *Gai(e)s du Québec*, March 1978.

ways that the community still faced stigmatization. Truxx “found-in” cases were eventually dropped half a decade later, in December 1983.

Corridart (1976)

By November 1975, after Drapeau had lost total control over the Olympic Games, Melvin Charney spearheaded a second “shout in the street” – a public art exhibition that would, once again, tackle the problems of modern urban life.¹⁰⁴ As official planner and designer for *Corridart*, Charney pushed to have the exhibition on Sherbrooke Street to recapture its heyday when it hosted processions, parades, and festivals – a time before it transformed into a thoroughfare for cars. Fundamentally, *Corridart* was a critique of the evolution of North American streets; it highlighted how city streets had been coopted from human-scale to scales of commerce and capital during the mid-twentieth-century.¹⁰⁵ And through its name it evoked and mirrored the city’s other “corridors,” like those of the newly-built underground city that were lined with bright boutiques, cinemas, restaurants, and stores. Therefore, *Corridart* was an artful critique of mass consumerism that was designed to “change the living conditions in [Montreal].”¹⁰⁶ From 7 to 31 July 1976, Sherbrooke Street was supposed to be given back to the public and become a “street-museum.”

To this end, Charney tried but failed to shut the street to traffic in order to restore the street’s sidewalks to their early-twentieth-century width.¹⁰⁷ Since car traffic would continue,

¹⁰⁴ By early 1976 he completed a study of streets in Canada for the federal department of urban affairs: “Streetworks: Generating public open space.” Cynthia Gunn, “He’d turn streets into parks,” *Montreal Star*, 26 February 1976. Anne Bower, “Rage under wrecker’s ball,” *The Financial Post*, 15 March 1975. “Growth by Destruction,” *Time*, 15 April 1974.

¹⁰⁵ Dale McConathy, “CORRIDART: Instant Archaeology in Montréal,” *Artscanada*, vol. 33, no. 206-207 (July/August 1976): 36.

¹⁰⁶ Melvin Charney, *Corridart dans la rue Sherbrooke, Montréal du 7 au 31 juillet. 1976* (Montreal: Programme arts et culture du Comité organisateur des Jeux olympiques de 1976, 1976).

¹⁰⁷ Gauvin, “*Corridart* Revisited,” 15.

Corridart's exhibits would take place in “transitional spaces” that emphasized everyday urban life in Montreal. These are what art critic René Viau describes as *entre-lieux* – spaces that function between the world of social change and the modern city like balconies, courtyards, gardens, entrances, terraces, squares, alleys, paths, and any other areas accessible to the public.¹⁰⁸ For the exhibition to take possession of these spaces, its organizers had to uproot healthy trees and rescind parking spots so that they could erect ephemeral stages for plays, readings, and recitals. Along the exhibition's five and a half mile-long stretch, artists were scheduled to perform at various moments of the day and night. *Corridart* cost \$386,000, which was only 5 percent of the \$8 million allocated to “crowd pleasing events.” And despite being a tiny fraction of the cost for the entire Olympics, it was the provincial government's largest contribution to the programme's visual arts division. In fact, COJO's head of visual arts Laurent Lamy referred to it as nothing less than “the backbone” of the whole Arts and Culture Program.¹⁰⁹ *Montreal Star* journalist Cynthia Gunn even argued that for the duration of the Olympics – at the very least – Sherbrooke Street could be ranked alongside an international nucleus of beautiful and humane streets, comparable to Paris's Champs-Élysées, London's Park Lane, Rome's Via Veneto, and New York's Fifth Avenue. Sherbrooke Street was “alive with color, art, music, history and information,” she argued.¹¹⁰

According to one critic, *Corridart*'s success hinged on its ethnographic qualities, found in artworks by Jean-Claude Marsan (*Mémoire de la rue Sherbrooke*), Marc Cramer (*Une rue montréalaise*), and Françoise Sullivan (*Hommage*). Another critic argued that the true spirit of the exhibition was captured in two works: Pierre Ayot and Denis Forcier's *La croix du Mont Royal sur la rue Sherbrooke*, a giant replica of Montreal's famous lighted Mount Royal cross

¹⁰⁸ René Viau, “Quand Montréal voyait (trop) grand,” *Liberté*, vol. 47, no. 3 (2005): 165-70.

¹⁰⁹ Cynthia Gunn, “A Street where art lives,” *Montreal Scene*, 10 July 1976.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

lying on its side, and Melvin Charney's *Les maisons de la rue Sherbrooke*, a house façade akin to those of a movie set and erected across from the École des Beaux-Arts.¹¹¹ Quite simply, *Corridart* evoked a multitude of urban planning failures under the Civic Party by highlighting “ruined city site[s].”¹¹² It stood in odd visual juxtaposition to official Olympic streamers that had been created by internationally acclaimed architect and designer François Dallegret. His multicoloured streamers hung across Montreal and gave it an atmosphere of festivity.¹¹³ But local residents felt and knew that *Corridart* revealed the truth and mirrored everyday life in Montreal better than Dallegret's jovial streamers.

As the creative force behind the exhibition, Charney had pushed for the idea of historicizing Sherbrooke Street to scrutinize Montreal's planning problems. Preoccupied by the failures of the city's evolution as a functionalist city, Charney's activism was far removed from movements like Save Montreal (1973) or Heritage Montreal (1975), which were especially concerned with the protection and preservation of colonial relics.¹¹⁴ Charney, who found heroic matter in Quebec's popular architecture, was much more sympathetic to Montreal's working-class tenements, like those that had been demolished during the push for material modernity in the late-1950s and those that went up in flames during the Red Weekend in 1974. By giving weighty importance to urban planners, architects, and urban designers – crucial actors in the production of spatial forms and arrangements – *Corridart* historicized mid-twentieth-century

¹¹¹ Gilles Toupin, “CORRIDART: l'histoire d'une rue,” *La Presse*, 10 July 1976; McConathy, “CORRIDART,” 45.

¹¹² “The work focuses an [*sic*] urban configuration: a city square at the intersection of two main streets. The intention was to create a metaphor out of a ruined city site.” Folder DR2012:0012:131:005, AP041 Melvin Charney Fonds, CCA.

¹¹³ Conceptually, Michael Haslam's *Télétron* was the closest piece to Dallegret's work. It was a phonebooth where the public could pick up the receiver and “hear the street” and messages “from the underground; poetry, music, strange sounds.” Haslam said: “I definitely wanted a multilingual package, and I strove to get other people to participate. I had people do tapes in French, English, and German. It was accessible and appealing, and people would listen to them.” McKenna, *À propos de l'Affaire Corridart*.

¹¹⁴ The destruction of the lavish Van Horne mansion in September 1973, which had been built by John Hamilton in 1869 and purchased by railway magnet Sir William Cornelius Van Horne in 1889, further spurred the preservation movement. See “The Saga of the Van Horne House,” in Gabeline, Lancken, and Pope, *Montreal at the Crossroads*.

Sherbrooke Street. Simply put, it was a powerful and provocative critique of reformist policies that explored how street life had been neglected in order to make way for automobiles and commerce.

In a very perceptible manner *Corridart* followed *Montreal, Plus or Minus?*'s intellectual mission by forcing people to think about the social costs of modern urban development. Unsurprisingly, many participants took part in both exhibitions, including William Vazan, Michael Hasla, John Honeyman (who did the graphic design for both), and Jean-Claude Marsan.¹¹⁵ The relationship between Marsan and Charney was extensive; both spent years lecturing at the Université de Montréal as professors of architecture. During *Montreal, Plus or Minus?* Marsan was wrapping-up his doctoral research on the socio-political history of architecture in Montreal and, by the time *Corridart* took shape, he had published what would become his magnum opus, *Montreal in Evolution* (1974).¹¹⁶ Although conceived by Charney to illustrate the street's history and morphology, *Mémoire de la rue Sherbrooke* was executed by Marsan and his students.¹¹⁷ Like all other artists who took part in *Corridart*, Marsan had given a lot of thought to the history of capitalism in Montreal. In fact, his photo exhibit, which showed how Sherbrooke Street appeared before it had been transformed by unbridled development, was touted as the true reason behind Mayor Drapeau's fiat. A city lawyer confirmed that the images used for *Mémoire de la rue Sherbrooke* had particularly upset the mayor and the city's executive committee.¹¹⁸ The images, and the texts accompanying them, illustrated how the Civic Party's

¹¹⁵ Gauvin, "Corridart Revisited," 113.

¹¹⁶ By 1976 Marsan was on the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts's board and, after publishing his first book, he received provincial funds to begin a study of the city's heritage. Influenced by pioneering urban historian Lewis Mumford, his first book has since undergone many reprints and reeditions, which, over time, increased its content from 423 to 730 pages. Jean-Claude Marsan, *Montréal en évolution : quatre siècles d'architecture et d'aménagement (4^e édition)* (Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2016). Gilles Toupin, "Il est interdit d'afficher!," *La Presse*, 24 July 1976.

¹¹⁷ Gauvin, "Corridart Revisited," 76-8.

¹¹⁸ Randy Gledhill, *L'Affaire Corridart Postcards* (Montreal: Éditions Véhicule, 1977), PC N6546 .Q42 .M6 1977, Library, CCA. "Corridart show was 'politics, not art': City Lawyer," *Montreal Gazette*, 31 January 1981.

hegemonic project had been contested by activists in areas adjacent to Sherbrooke Street: Saint-André Street, Saint-Norbert Street, and in Milton Park.¹¹⁹ Building on his contribution for *Montreal, Plus or Minus?* Marsan's *Mémoire de la rue Sherbrooke* criticized the ways in which political and financial elites had decimated local communities.

The outspoken artists behind *Corridart* did not constitute a fringe artistic segment either. Claude Péloquin, one of Quebec's most revered poets and experimental artists, wrote an opinion piece in which he argued that Drapeau was in the process of replacing the heart and soul of the city for short-sighted financial gains: "Montreal by Night is dead [...] Thank you Mr. Drapeau for killing the woman I loved."¹²⁰ This *cris du cœur* came on the heels of a decision by the mayor to shutdown the Esquire Show Bar, a beloved downtown jazz club. A few weeks later, a journalist for *Le Jour* echoed similar thoughts when he reported on the *Corridart* affair. In fact, his article recalled the way that other artists, like Lili St-Cyr and Thérèse Masson, had described the city's transformation during the 1960s. "Montreal is dead," he wrote. "That's what the *Corridart* artists had been trying to tell us. And they were right."¹²¹

On Sunday 11 July, three weeks after the largest gay rights demonstration in Canadian history, Mayor Drapeau took a drive down Sherbrooke Street in his Lincoln Continental. "I went around by car," Drapeau later stated, "I did the round trip, both ways, slowing down or stopping in certain cases to see what was attached to the construction scaffolds [...] It shocked me. It humiliated me. It insulted me to realize that Sherbrooke Street would become a dump, for certain of those things were certainly things you find in dumps or headed there."¹²² While he

¹¹⁹ Francine Couture, "L'exposition *Corridart*: un cas de controverse esthétique ou politique?," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* vol. 9, no. 3 (summer 2001): 17.

¹²⁰ Claude Péloquin, "Merci à M. Drapeau d'avoir tué la femme que j'aimais," *La Presse*, 25 June 1976.

¹²¹ Robert Lévesque, "Le point du jour," *Le Jour*, 16 July 1976.

¹²² "What happened when the mayor took a drive down Sherbrooke St.," *Montreal Gazette*, 6 October 1979.

drove around, Drapeau saw the finger-pointing and artistic forms of protest, and he saw how artists had made a mockery of his endeavour to make Montreal the greatest city in the world. The following Tuesday night Drapeau's flippant remark about how parts of the exhibition looked like they should be headed to the dump became a reality. In the middle of a cool and rainy night between 13 and 14 July 1976, on orders from the executive committee of the City of Montreal, five teams of municipal workers – paid overtime and escorted by police – made their way down Sherbrooke Street to remove *Corridart*. The employees proceeded in a flotilla of cranes and a score of trucks and followed orders that instructed them to rid Sherbrooke of artworks. On an otherwise dark and silent Tuesday night, under the glare of floodlights and using hex keys and crowbars, city employees unmoored, destroyed, and expelled the artworks from public sight, beginning with Marsan's *Mémoire de la rue Sherbrooke* (fig. 18).¹²³ When assistant director of COJO's art program John Gordon heard from "newspaper people" that something was about to go down he phoned Melvin Charney, and the pair eventually drove toward Sherbrooke Street to reach the centre of the action. Gordon pleaded with city employees to halt – or at least pause – their destructive assignment. His interference was met by police officers who placed him in custody and hauled him off to jail, though no charges were filed.¹²⁴

The fact that authorities had assigned police officers to stand by city employees during the process provided clear evidence that the undertaking had the potential for violent confrontations. But more telling still was the fact that they had acted under the cover of darkness and hidden from public scrutiny. This destruction could not have happened during the daytime when Sherbrooke Street bustled with residents and tourists. At the break of dawn on 14 July,

¹²³ The paragraph draws from Gledhill, *L'Affaire Corridart Postcards*, PC N6546 .Q42 .M6 1977, Library, CCA; Kuhn, "Culture Shock"; Richard Levesque, "City tears down 'obscene' Corridart," *Montreal Gazette*, 14 July 1976; Angèle Dagenais, "L'Allier 'prie' Drapeau de reconstituer Corridart," *Le Devoir*, 15 July 1976; Jean-Pierre Charbonneau and Andrée Lebel, "Montréal ordonne de démolir Corridart," *La Presse*, 14 July 1976.

¹²⁴ Kuhn, "Culture Shock."

Montreal residents read the executive committee's rationale in the *Montreal Star*: "the exhibit violated by-laws on the occupancy of public domain and were a safety hazard."¹²⁵ That day, the façades of Charney's *Les maisons de la rue Sherbrooke* were also loaded in a dump truck and brought to the city pound on Louvain Street. And in the following days employees returned to Sherbrooke Street to pry the works that had been too cumbersome or difficult to remove from the street.¹²⁶ Some were dismantled by the artists themselves, both out of solidarity and out of fear that city workers would destroy their works. Eventually everything that had to do with *Corridart* – including street performances and public activities – was cancelled.



Figure 18: City employees dismantle *Mémoire de la rue Sherbrooke* with the help of a crane. Louis-Philippe Meunier, "Démolition de CORRIDART, rue Sherbrooke," 13-14 July 1976, VM94-EM0752-003, AVM.

¹²⁵ Richard Lévesque, "City tears down 'obscene' Corridart," *Montreal Star*, 14 July 1976.

¹²⁶ Pascale Choquette, "Corridart: d'un événement culturel à une affaire juridique. Analyse des textes journalistiques et du jugement de l'affaire Corridart (1975-1988)," (M.A. thesis (Communication), Université de Sherbrooke, 1996), 46-7.

Editorials and news reports about the affair described it as public discourse censorship, a clear display of Drapolice in action.¹²⁷ Given that *Corridart* was mostly funded by the province of Quebec, one McGill University political science professor even argued that it was an unprecedented and a historical moment in municipal-provincial relations: “This is undoubtedly the greatest blow the Montreal administration has ever administered to the provincial government. It’s unbelievable! The furtive nighttime destruction of state approved artworks (since doing so in broad daylight would have required too much courage) is nothing but first-rate imbecility.”¹²⁸ This polemic is all the more surprising given the period’s context, especially since the events described in previous chapters would have been fresh in Montrealers’ minds. Tellingly, roughly 75 percent of the hundreds of newspaper articles written about *Corridart* were printed after the incident.

In the wake of *Corridart*’s destruction, reporters, artists, civil rights organizations, and politicians from across Canada underlined how the surreptitious nature of the manoeuvre and the censorship of art had been a crime against the freedom of expression and a political manoeuvre against social change.¹²⁹ On the night of 15 July demonstrators marched on Place des Arts and read an anti-censorship manifesto. The protest took shape following reports that the mayor’s office had cancelled the “terrasse de lecture,” a youth-oriented, free, and festive street kiosk coordinated by the city’s head librarian to promote literacy and an openness to different

¹²⁷ Writing for *Le Jour*, journalist Robert Lévesque wrote: “Comme des rats, sous l’œil de la Drapolice, des employés municipaux ont nettoyé la rue qui mène au stade Taillibert de tout ce qui déplaisait à monsieur le maire.” Quoted in Louise Descoteaux, “Corridart : La censure,” (M.A. thesis (Art History), Université du Québec à Montréal, 1993), 27-8.

¹²⁸ Daniel Latouche, “Un saccage culturel,” *Montreal-Matin*, 15 July 1976.

¹²⁹ Letter from the president of the International Association of Art Critics, Virgil Hammock to Jean Drapeau. Joan Lowndes, “Editorial: Fascist Suppression in Montréal,” *Vanguard*, September 1976, 97P-615 :02/3, 97P – Fonds Laurent Lamy, Archives UQÀM. Edmund Alleyn, “Un geste fasciste,” *La Presse*, 17 July 1976. Claude Turcotte, “Le boycottage par les artistes s’amorce avec difficulté,” *La Presse*, 16 July 1976. René-E. Boulay, “Le démantèlement de Corridart,” *La Presse*, 17 July 1976.

cultures during the Olympics.¹³⁰ The following day, MCM councillor Nick Auf der Maur and Simone Chartrand of the Ligue des droits de l'homme organized a street demonstration to show solidarity with the city's arts and culture industry.¹³¹ And during the Games' five-hundred-odd cultural events – which included Quebec folk dances, ballets, plays, concerts of symphonic and chamber music, and shows that were part of the Arts and Culture Program – artists read an official statement in solidarity with *Corridart*: “It is with regret that we must ask ourselves in the face of the world: What is freedom to Montreal? It is the freedom of powerful, small-minded men to efface what they find offensive. It is the freedom of demolition crews to emerge by night and, guarded by police, to destroy without notice a work of art. It is freedom accorded to the rulers of our city but to no other citizens. It is the freedom of a police state.”¹³² The statement reminded those who had come to revel in the glory of the Olympic Games that Montrealers were under intense police surveillance. It was a message that poets echoed during the *Solstice de la Poésie Québécoise*. On the night of 23 July, they read a manifesto that also questioned the connection between the Olympic Games, modern capitalism, and police and military presence in the city.¹³³

Acting as a gatekeeper of cultural tastes, Drapeau was the mastermind behind what everyone had seen as a brazen act of censorship. While the executive committee argued that *Corridart* had been dismantled because it did not comply with the bylaw concerning the

¹³⁰ Bernard Morrier, “Un groupe d’artistes met la Ville en demeure de rétablir Corridart,” *Le Devoir*, 23 July 1976. Robert Lévesque, “Une deuxième affaire corridart,” *Le Jour*, 17 July 1976 quoted in Choquette, “Corridart: d’un événement culturel à une affaire juridique,” 311.

¹³¹ Claude Turcotte, “Le COJO ne poursuivra pas Montréal pour Corridart,” *La Presse*, 17 July 1976.

¹³² The message was reprinted in several outlets including the *Montreal Gazette*, “Destruction in the dark,” 15 July 1976. “Message lus en appui à Corridart par des artistes avant la présentation de spectacles du programme Art et culture.” Quoted in Choquette, “Corridart: d’un événement culturel à une affaire juridique,” 279.

¹³³ The manifesto was republished in the poetic journal *Dérives* and signed by Nicole Brossard, François Charron, Madeleine Gagnon, Louis Geoffroy, Philippe Haeck, Gilles Hénault, André Roy, Jean Simoneau, and Patrick Straram. “Le solstice de la poésie québécoise,” *Dérives*, vol. 5/6 (1976), 29-30. See also Patrick Straram, *Dérives*, vol. 5/6 (1976), 45.

occupation of public space and that it was a hazard to public safety, artists knew that this was a false pretext since the Police Department had vetted the site before it opened to the public.

“Indeed,” wrote a *La Presse* journalist, “Mr. Drapeau saw how *Corridart* was a flagrant critique of his *œuvre* and he could not resist the temptation to obliterate it.”¹³⁴

Afterlife and Trial

As had been the case with nightclub and bathhouse raids, the operation took place at night. In the competing visions of order that clashed under the cover of darkness, the mayor opted to preserve the city’s “integrity” and, in his own view, keep it clear of obscene debris.¹³⁵ Indeed, the mayor used the 1976 Olympic Games to clear public spaces of nonconforming sexual and artistic forces. This began in 1975 with the crackdown on gay clubs, and continued with the destruction of street art.

It was only after the end of the Olympic Games that the city released the artwork. By keeping the artworks from their creators for forty days and nights, and without due process, the city had allowed the affair to fade from public conversation. In late-August 1976 Drapeau was invited to testify before members of the National Assembly’s Commission permanente des affaires municipales et de l’environnement to explain the outrageous cost of the Olympic Games. When the subject of *Corridart* surfaced, he offered the following statement: “This affair along Sherbrooke Street was one of the most incredible farce, fraud, I go as far as the word fraud, that could be imagined.”¹³⁶ Defending the artists and voicing their frustration, Saint-

¹³⁴ Claude Turcotte, “Corridart: une colère de Jean Drapeau,” *La Presse*, 17 July 1976. Gilles Toupin, “Il est interdit d’afficher!,” *La Presse*, 24 July 1976. Angèle Dagenais, “L’Allier ‘prie’ Drapeau de reconstituer Corridart,” *Le Devoir* 15 July 1976. Claude Turcotte, “L’Allier crie à la censure et ordonne à Montréal de reconstruire Corridart,” *La Presse*, 15 July 1976.

¹³⁵ Michel Roy, “La honte d’une folle nuit,” *Le Devoir*, 15 July 1976. François de Massy, “M. Drapeau se sentait dérangé,” *La Presse*, 15 July 1976.

¹³⁶ Jean Drapeau, *Journal des débats de la Commission permanente des affaires municipales et de l’environnement*, 25 August 1976, Bibliothèque de l’Assemblée nationale du Québec.

Jacques MNA Claude Charron asked under what right he had destroyed publicly funded art and why he did so at night: “you hate critiques, you hate opposition, you’re afraid of admitting your administration’s wrongdoings, not only when you’ve demolished homes, but even when you’ve demolished pictures of those homes. You’re afraid of facing responsibility for actions you took under the cloak of darkness [...] you’ve acted like a dictator, an emperor, as you’ve always done with the City of Montreal.”¹³⁷

In autumn 1976, months after they regained possession of their artworks and saw the extent of the damage, thirteen *Corridart* artists filed a \$355,000 lawsuit against the City of Montreal and COJO for wasted time, damage to reputation, loss of prestige, inconvenience, and financial loss.¹³⁸ Anticipating a long and unpredictable trial, the artists funded their legal fees by creating more art – notably postcards published by Véhicule Press.¹³⁹ As art historian Louise Descoteaux notes, although they had brought the City of Montreal and COJO to court the plaintiffs and their lawyers were clearly after Mayor Drapeau.¹⁴⁰ When Drapeau was called to testify in mid-January 1981 he reiterated his claim that *Corridart* had been aesthetically worthless, demeaning to the city’s appearance, and contravened city bylaws. In short, it was antithetical to the Olympic Games’ triumphant message. His testimony, however, contradicted what other appellants had said, and he denied full responsibility for the artworks’ removal. For instance, when he was asked why the works had been removed at night, he pleaded ignorance, stating that it was probably to avoid a traffic jam along Sherbrooke Street.¹⁴¹ Drapeau remained

¹³⁷ Claude Charron, *Journal des débats de la Commission permanente des affaires municipales et de l’environnement*, 25 August 1976, Bibliothèque de l’Assemblée nationale du Québec.

¹³⁸ Pierre Ayot, Jean-Claude Thibaudeau, Michael Haslam, Marc Cramer, Danyelle Morin, and Guy Montpetit v. *City of Montreal and COJO* [1981] Q.S.C., 28.

¹³⁹ Gledhill, *L’Affaire Corridart Postcards*, PC N6546 .Q42 .M6 1977, Library, CCA.

¹⁴⁰ Descoteaux, “Corridart : La censure,” 106-11.

¹⁴¹ “L’ordre de démanteler Corridart serait venu de Jean Drapeau,” *Le Devoir*, 7 October 1980. Martha Gagnon, “On n’enveloppe pas un diamant dans du papier journal,” *La Presse*, 22 January 1981. “Drapeau n’a vu aucun art dans *Corridart*, certains ont bien appliqué la décision de Drapeau,” *Journal de Montréal*, 27 January 1981.

defiant and stood by his claim that the undoing of *Corridart* had been neither an act of censorship nor an assault on the laws governing the freedom of expression – a stance that received support from some politicians and citizens. This included David Stewart of the charitable Macdonald-Stewart Foundation, who stated that *Corridart*'s message was an insult to Montreal: "I was born on Sherbrooke St. I work on Sherbrooke St. and I live on Sherbrooke St.," he disclosed. "If people want obscenity, that's fine with me. But not in the street. Art, according to the dictionary, means something beautiful, gay. There's nothing in the definition of art that says it should be obscene or provocative."¹⁴² Ironically, Stewart's NIMBYism – speaking as a wealthy elite about "his" city and "his" street – personified what *Corridart*'s anti-capitalist critique was speaking out against. Incidentally, Charney observed that those who railed against the exhibition's artistic merit were mostly anglophone Montrealers; others, he noted, were happy to see an artistic representation of *their* city.¹⁴³

At the trial artists, art experts, critics, and politicians debated the resoundingly awkward notion of aesthetics and artistic beauty. It exemplified the twentieth century's seismic shift in culture and the way that it had totally transformed people's ways of apprehending reality and art production. In fact, the discourse typified what historian Eric Hobsbawm claimed was the end of "traditional privileged status of 'the arts' in the old bourgeois society, that is to say their function as measures of good and bad, as carriers of value: of truth, beauty and catharsis."¹⁴⁴ Indeed, the trial would sidestep the whole array of urban issues that was at the heart of *Corridart*. In the end, Superior Court Justice Ignace J. Deslauriers ruled in favour of the city;

¹⁴² Martha Gagnon, "Les avocats qualifient Drapeau de dictateur," *La Presse*, 30 January 1981. Bernard Morrier, "Drapeau, un 'dictateur'," *Le Devoir*; 30 January 1981. "Razing 1976 art exhibit 'dictatorial,' say lawyers," *Montreal Gazette*, 30 January 1981. Michael Hoffman, "Corridart a failure to urban planner," *Montreal Gazette*, 28 January 1981.

¹⁴³ Gilles Toupin, "Il est interdit d'afficher!," *La Presse*, 24 July 1976.

¹⁴⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, *Fractured Times: Culture and Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: The New Press, 2014), xiv.

Corridart's lack of beauty created a malaise and the judge described the whole exhibition as a failed antimodernist critique by Marxists who disapproved of urban reforms.¹⁴⁵ Artists could not believe that Deslauriers, like Drapeau, dismissed contemporary art's value and that he held a narrow understanding of artistic expression, one rooted in the tricky notion of "beauty."¹⁴⁶ Needless to say, Deslauriers's decision sent a shockwave across the country. Energized by overwhelming public support, *Corridart*'s artists brought their case before the Quebec Court of Appeal. To finance this appeal, the artists created *Corridart 1976-* (fig. 19), an oversized book of prints published by the artist-run print workshop and gallery Graff. Its preface states: "Corridart 1976- produced by artists for the defense of a cause which concerns all artists, rises against totalitarianism and interference. [...] it affirms the will to maintain within art its function of free expression and reaffirms the position of the artists involved and the testimony of the experts."¹⁴⁷ The Corridart Affair would be settled out-of-court twelve years later in 1988. Under a new mayor the city awarded \$85,000 to the plaintiffs – after paying legal fees, each artist received a meagre compensation of roughly \$3,000.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Ignace J. Deslauriers, "Contre l'art comme outil de contestation," *Le Soleil*, 1 June 1981.

¹⁴⁶ 97P-615 :02/3, 97P Fonds Laurent Lamy, Archives UQÀM. *Ayot et al. v. City of Montréal and COJO* [1981] Q.S.C.

¹⁴⁷ Madeleine Forcier, "Preface," in *Corridart 1976-* (Montreal: Graff, 1982). PC N6546 .Q42 .M62 1982, Library, CCA.

¹⁴⁸ *Corridart* returned to the limelight forty years later when Mayor Denis Coderre axed a plan to revive Ayot's *La croix du mont Royal* as part of an organized retrospect of the artist's work. Jeanne Corriveau, "Montréal accusée de censure," *Le Devoir*, 22 September 2016.



Figure 19: Bruegel's *The Tower of Babel*, the unfinished Olympic Stadium, and a decaying \$1 Canadian bill. Bob and Kevin McKenna, "Ode to the structure of their achievements," in *Corridart 1976-* (Montreal: Graff, 1982). PC N6546 .Q42 .M62 1982, Library, CCA.

Conclusion

This chapter showed how the Civic Party was concerned with optics in an increasingly globalizing world and how, in response, activists used city streets to defy its vision and authority. It shows the extent to which nighttime reproduced some forms of power, while also providing opportunities for resistance in other settings. The battleground between repressive power and cultural resistance was heightened in the months leading up to the Olympic Games. Defiance, however, took different forms. For instance, in lieu of well-established platforms and institutions like those that were offer to Melvin Charney for his exhibitions, Montreal's queer folk resorted to community organizing and street demonstrations. Experiencing the Civic Party's rueful urban reforms and its repressive manoeuvres, Montrealers challenged and fought

modernism and its ties to commerce and capital. And every step along the way the municipal administration received help from the police to quell challenges, whether it meant raids on queer nightspots or supervising city employees who had to dispose of artworks. These manoeuvres, however, energized activists who contested authority on the streets and brought their challenges to the Quebec Superior Court.

According to artists, the Corridart Affair had been an “inglorious night incarnating the triumph of reactionary forces.”¹⁴⁹ The “cleanup” had occurred because the exhibition’s message posed a direct threat to the Civic Party’s aims and goals to make Montreal a “world-class” city. It would be much later, as they still clamoured for justice, that a settlement was reached out of court. By then Drapeau had lost the 1986 election to Jean Doré and was on his way to Paris as the Canadian ambassador to UNESCO. Citizens of the whole province, for their part, had to contend with an Olympic debt of \$1.5 billion, which the province finally finished paying off in 2006.¹⁵⁰ Like the events that transformed liquor legislation, and those that had led to the Night of Terror and the Red Weekend, the crackdown on art and the attack on the queer community forced the provincial government to intervene and cleanup the Civic Party’s mess. This, plus the financial fiasco of the Olympic Games, was in many ways the end of Jean Drapeau’s obsessive edifice complex. As it became increasingly clear that Montreal would not evolve into the metropolis he desired, he tempered his ambitions and refocused the Civic Party’s attention to local needs. But in addressing these needs, the Civic Party continued to “clean” the city’s image by cracking down on street-based sex work, and on this occasion it forced the federal government to intervene.

¹⁴⁹ Laurent Lamy, “The appeal of the Corridart Artists,” in *Corridart 1976-*, PC N6546 .Q42 .M62 1982, Library, CCA.

¹⁵⁰ “Quebec’s Big Owe stadium debt is over,” *CBC News*, 19 December 2006.

Chapter 5: Sexist Bylaws and Sex Work, 1976-1986

For Mayor Jean Drapeau the 1978 election came with challenges and challengers that, in stark contrast to earlier campaigns, nearly prevailed over the Civic Party. Throughout the electoral campaign the opposition contended that the party misunderstood Montrealers' thirst for a policy shift away from megaprojects, toward one that would tend to their everyday needs. Thus, in the wake of that election, after the Civic Party won a slim victory with 60 percent of the votes, it appointed the young and ambitious politician Yvon Lamarre to chair the executive committee to show that it was serious about meeting the everyday needs of residents.¹ Lamarre, who remained chair until Drapeau retired in 1986, responded to opponents and critics by making it his mission to improve Montrealers' quality of life. In particular, he focused on human-scale "beautification" projects, like upgrading old commercial streets with new streetlights, pedestrian malls, and decorative paving and planters, which revitalized and enlivened the city. He also established what one reporter called the municipal administration's most laudable endeavour – the Maisons de la Culture de Montréal, a project that placed the Sherbrooke Street municipal library at the centre of a network of branches that promoted literature, poetry, theatre, art, music, and films. In 1981, two years after Lamarre announced the project, the first maison opened in the low-income neighbourhood of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, and within a decade another seven opened in adjacent neighbourhoods.² In 1979 the city also launched the Commission d'initiative et de développement économiques de Montréal (CIDEM) to stimulate economic growth. Under Lamarre, the CIDEM assumed responsibility for public housing by creating Opération 10,000 logements. This "beautification" project was created to reduce the outflow of middle-class

¹ Over 38 percent of Montrealers voted for the left-libertarian Montreal Citizens' Movement (MCM) or the Municipal Action Group (MAG) – a new centrist party that broke away from the MCM.

² Willie Chevalier, "Les Maisons de la Culture de Montréal," *Vie des arts* vol. 30, no. 120 (Septembre-automne 1985): 42-5.

residents to the suburbs by offering financial incentives to real estate developers and middle-class buyers.³

But as Lamarre beautified Montreal through urban renewal, culture, and housing projects, he also embarked on a parallel mission that promised to refine the city's image. "The Drapeau-Lamarre administration continues its 'beautification campaign' by waging war against soliciting, prostitution, and drinking in public space," announced *La Presse* after City Hall passed an anti-prostitution bylaw and an anti-drinking bylaw.⁴ While the idea of banning public drinking was straightforward – the city would clampdown on public inebriation, especially in parks and in tourist-heavy Old Montreal – the idea behind the bylaw that banned prostitution and soliciting was flawed and impractical because, unlike public drinking, prostitution and soliciting were devoid of material evidence and would be based on when and how women used public space. Moreover, because both bylaws were designed to make public space more visually attractive, each had little to no effect on discreet or upscale markets; people who could afford to pay for sex or drinks on private properties or in licensed establishments could continue their transactions, while officers patrolled streets, cracking down on presumed sex workers and drinkers.⁵ Indeed, it was the visibility of sex workers that the city wanted to eradicate, and this process was further tied-up in policing gender, race, and language. By enacting these bylaws City Hall had placed nighttime at the centre of ongoing debates over profiling and women's right to the city in 1980s Montreal.

³ For more on Opération 10,000 logements see Simon Vickers, "From *Balconville* to *Condoville*, but Where Is *Copville*? Neighbourhood Activism in 1980s Pointe-Saint-Charles," *Labour/Le Travail* vol. 81 (Spring 2018): 159-86. Damaris Rose, "Local State Policy and 'New-Build Gentrification' in Montréal: the Role of the 'Population Factor' in a Fragmented Governance Context," *Population, Space, and Place* vol. 16, no. 5 (2010): 413-28.

⁴ Michel Girard, "Plus question de racoler ou de boire de l'alcool dans les rues de Montréal," *La Presse*, 27 May 1980.

⁵ Pierre-Paul Gagné, "La prostitution à Montréal: Un commerce de luxe difficile à contrôler," *La Presse*, 23 July 1980. Robert Gemme et al., *A Report on Prostitution in Quebec* (Ottawa: Department of Justice, 1984), 111-2.

But the idea that the Civic Party's anti-prostitution bylaw could be implemented without pushback was more than impractical, it was illegal. First, it was the municipal administration's attempt at circumventing a 1978 Supreme Court of Canada decision that amended the Criminal Code. The Supreme Court had ruled that for prostitution to be an offence it had to be "pressing and persistent." This decision posed a social and legal problem for Canadian municipal authorities because local police departments could not provide evidence of "pressing and persistent" soliciting. According to *Maclean's*, following the ruling, major streets across Canadian cities had turned into "sexual supermarkets."⁶ In Montreal, street-based sex workers returned to the Red Light district in such volume that one police officer claimed that "[n]o male [could] go through the area without being automatically accosted," and one journalist wrote, "[d]ecent folk off in search of the traditional 'steamie' have noticed the St. Lawrence Main is as bad as it was before Jean Drapeau's 1950s clean-up."⁷ The ruling had quashed the department's authority in establishing and limiting an unofficial zone of toleration for sex workers. Moreover, the Supreme Court decision emboldened both clients (pedestrians and drivers alike) and sex workers to use the Red Light district's streets as a meeting place. It was this feedback loop – adding both supply and demand – that led to the regrowth of the sex industry in the district. But because the tenement rows that housed brothels during the 1950s had been bulldozed, sex workers now worked from the Red Light district's streets. Civic Party councillors who made their way home from City Hall at night noticed nuisances that were linked to street-based sex work like traffic, noise, and public consumption of alcohol and drugs. The sex industry's proliferation, they claimed, constituted a threat to the city's image. Thus, the project of policing sex work was not simply a contest over the limits of permissible sexual practice and social

⁶ Kevin Doyle, "The Sexual Debate," *Maclean's*, 15 April 1985.

⁷ "City's prostitution bylaw upheld," *Montreal Gazette*, 13 January 1981. Ted Blackman, "Hustlers regain grip on the Main," *Montreal Gazette*, 15 November 1979.

conduct in public space. It was also the site of an institutional struggle over the boundaries of the criminal justice system itself.

Second, a few nights after City Hall passed the anti-prostitution bylaw a coalition of rights activists known as the “groupe de pression 80-81,” which included city council members of the opposition as well as members from gay, feminist, and labour rights groups, rallied to protest its sexist framework and the fact that its vague wording left too much discretion to police in deciding what women could do in public space.⁸ Indeed, a police officer’s arrest typically hinged on an observed “arrestable behaviour” drawn from the officer’s appraisal of a woman’s appearance, the company she allegedly kept, and the time and place in which she was apprehended. Additionally, police often profiled community members based on race and language – a fact revealed in both police and news reports. Therefore, this chapter adds to the existing scholarship on the link between racial profiling and urban policy by showing how the anti-prostitution bylaw allowed police to disproportionately surveil Black and Indigenous women – particularly those who spoke English – as they patrolled public space at night.⁹ Moreover, this chapter demonstrates that this attempt to govern nighttime public space was not an isolated case. Rather, it was part of a long and continuous history of Canadian police applying prostitution (by)laws to target women who were not of the dominant race, religion, or ethnic group and thought to threaten the social order.¹⁰

Despite mounting complaints, Civic Party councillors assured the public that the anti-prostitution bylaw was practical because, not only did it clear city streets from unwanted

⁸ Alain Duhamel, “Des règlements abusifs, disent les conseillers de l’opposition,” *Le Devoir*, 27 May 1980. Florian Bernard, “Levée de boucliers contre les deux règlements sur le racolage et l’alcool,” *La Presse*, 3 June 1980. “Un groupe tente d’obtenir le rappel des règlements 80 et 81,” *La Presse*, 4 June 1980.

⁹ See Ted Rutland, “Profiling the Future: The Long Struggle against Police Racial Profiling in Montreal,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* vol. 50, no. 3 (2020): 270-92.

¹⁰ Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice*, 230. Bertram, “The Other Little House.”

soliciting, but it also made them “safer.” This claim, which councillors repeated for months, incensed feminists and rights activists who responded by evoking the irony of “protecting” male residents from the “dangers” of soliciting sex workers. “I would love for [you councillors] to see how women are solicited on city streets, day and night,” wrote one woman, “unlike yours, her safety is always at risk.”¹¹ Critics railed against the fact that men enacted a bylaw that shielded them from sex workers but failed to address the long history of sexual violence and dangers that women faced in public space. Furthermore, the bylaw also gave a political dimension to the most innocent practice – “remain[ing] in a public place,” which allowed police to clear parks and streets of innocent bystanders. Although the Civic Party paid scant attention to critics, the mounting letters, rallies, and protests set the tone for a long legal battle between the party and civil rights groups. Ultimately, the anti-prostitution bylaw typified the Civic Party’s political agenda because it focused on recasting the city’s image rather than safeguarding its population from veritable dangers. Under these circumstances, the governance of nighttime public space became a terrain where profound questions about gender and the right to the city emerged.

This chapter focuses on the administration’s response to the shifting nature of sex work in the late-1970s and early-1980s. During this period, the sex industry’s visibility on nighttime city streets increased,¹² but rather than create safer conditions for sex workers or focus on the social and economic factors that gave rise to it, the Civic Party’s strategy remained deeply preoccupied with Montreal’s image. Similar to other instances of moral policing, the vagueness of the administration’s 1980 anti-prostitution bylaw allowed police to engage in surveillance of sex-related business and was based on officers’ dubious ability to discern individuals who

¹¹ Louise Perreault, “Non mais, faites-moi rire!,” *La Presse*, 30 July 1980. Nathalie Pélusse, “Et les femmes alors?,” *La Presse*, 22 August 1980.

¹² According to mid-1980s research “there is a very great difference between daytime and evening activity levels [...] the peak hours are from 10:00 P.M. to 1:00 A.M.” Gemme, *Street Prostitution: Assessing the Impact of the Law, Montreal* (Ottawa: Department of Justice, 1989), 145-6.

contributed to the industry, which often brought into relief anxieties relating to race, language, and gender.¹³ Eventually, the bylaw was struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada in a swift and decisive ruling because it overstepped the exclusive federal responsibility for dealing with prostitution. However, the Civic Party countered this decision by enacting an anti-soliciting bylaw in 1983, which was presented under the pretence of prohibiting vendors from “soliciting” in public space. Although the party had support from members of the public, police, merchants, and some feminists who were leading congruent campaigns against prostitution and pornography, the anti-soliciting bylaw was met with challenges from civil rights, labour, and sex work activists.¹⁴

At the same time, because similar police crackdowns had been happening across Canada during the early-1980s, a growing movement for sex workers rights started to emerge. Male and female sex workers challenged local bylaws and mainstream stigma by organizing for safer labour conditions at a moment when the global pandemic of HIV/AIDS started. Again, rather than addressing health concerns, local politicians focused their efforts on having the federal government change the Criminal Code and ease the restrictions on prosecuting sex workers. In June 1983, following sustained pressure from Jean Drapeau and mayors from Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver, the federal government convened the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution to examine the place of the sex industry within Canadian society. Ultimately, the commission led to amendments to the Criminal Code dealing with prostitution in 1985, a few months before Drapeau retired. Revisiting these anti-sex industry campaigns sheds light on a

¹³ See Fischer, *The Streets Belong to Us*.

¹⁴ For more on feminism and sex work see Maria Nengeh Mensah and Marie-Claude Laberge, “Évolution du discours féministe sur ‘la prostitution’ au Québec,” *Bulletin d’histoire politique*, vol. 15, no. 1 (Fall 2006): 71-80.

chapter of Montreal history that is frequently shocking but also full of resistance, of surprising alliances and remarkable legal gambits.

Street-Based Sex Work in the Late-1970s

*The situation was such that no man could walk through Saint-Catherine and Saint-Laurent streets without being solicited. [...] It's a little discouraging to work in this sector because [prostitution] is eternal.*¹⁵

– City of Montreal Lawyer, 1980

As previous chapters have shown, street-based sex work increased in the aftermath of municipal crackdowns on the old bawdy-house system. In Montreal this became more visible on sidewalks and in parks that were already associated with vice and where police were less inclined to enforce prostitution laws. At times, however, police coordinated cleanup operations in these same spots to maintain the image of law enforcement and to meet previously-established arrest quotas.¹⁶ But the number of street-based sex workers grew across Canadian cities following a 1978 Supreme Court of Canada ruling on the nature of “soliciting.” Since Canada’s first Criminal Code in 1892, and essentially unchanged until 1972, prostitution was treated as a “status” offence associated with vagrancy: “being a common prostitute or nightwalker is found in a public place and does not, when required, give a good account of herself.” In 1972 it was repealed because it was unjust to arrest a person for reasons of identity alone. While this legal reform addressed some of the recommendations that had been made by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (1970) concerning the Criminal Code’s sexist and anachronistic terms, the soliciting law that replaced it focused on behaviour by prohibiting individuals from soliciting in a public place for prostitution.¹⁷ Enforcement of this legislation was problematic, however, and a case reached the country’s highest court after a

¹⁵ Pierre-Paul Gagné, “La prostitution à Montréal : D’abord, nettoyer la ‘Main’,” *La Presse*, July 19, 1980.

¹⁶ Gemme, *Street Prostitution*, 65.

¹⁷ Brock, *Making Work*, 32.

Vancouver sex worker, Debra Hutt, was arrested and charged by an undercover police officer. She appealed on the grounds that she had entered his car with his consent and had identified herself as a prostitute and discussed terms for her services. In February 1978 the Supreme Court ruled that for a person to be charged with soliciting, his or her behaviour had to be “pressing and persistent” and also indicated that a private car on a public thoroughfare did not constitute a “public place.”¹⁸ Immediately following this decision all cases where the evidence of soliciting was based on a woman’s physical overtures in public were thrown out of court. The decision left the police powerless to control street prostitution because sex workers’ propositions were not “pressing and persistent.” That is why, following the “Hutt” decision, police departments across Canada lobbied municipal administrations to create tougher anti-soliciting bylaws. As we’ll see below it is within this context that police departments and municipal administrations, including Jean Drapeau’s Civic Party, embarked on a multilateral political campaign to amend the Criminal Code.

Street-based sex work – with its legal, social, health, and economic implications – proliferated against a backdrop of high unemployment and intensified during the recession of the early-1980s, just as the HIV/AIDS pandemic was coming to redefine it in a major way.¹⁹ The growth of the sex industry led investigative journalists and filmmakers alike to produce thought-provoking content to inform the public. For instance, after befriending some of the individuals who played a role in the trade, two journalists wrote a book-length ethnographic report about sex workers. In it one sex worker, Louise, humorously articulated how she aspired for a better life but constantly confronted legal problems: “You spend the night in a cell and the next morning the police take you to the Municipal Court. There, the judge gives you a fine [...]

¹⁸ *Hutt v. The Queen* [1978] 2 S.C.R. E. Nick Larsen, “Urban Politics and Prostitution Control: A Qualitative Analysis of a Controversial Urban Problem,” *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, vol. 8, no. 1 (June 1999): 29.

¹⁹ For a comprehensive labour history of Montreal during this period see High, *Deindustrializing Montreal*.

Then you go home and you can start working again!”²⁰ Louise could laugh at the authorities’ attempt to control and eliminate the industry, but as the authors’ report emphasized, her trade was more often than not characterized by substance abuse, male domination, and harsh legal penalties.²¹ Several films gave further insight into the legal and social implications of sex work. For instance, *Nose and Tina* (1980) shows how a Winnipeg-based Indigenous massage parlour worker Linda Nigwams managed despite legal difficulties; *Not a Love Story: A Film About Pornography* (1981) follows Montreal stripper Linda Lee Tracey in her pursuit to understand the contours of the sex industry; and Genie award winner for Best Feature Length Documentary, *Plusieurs tombent en amour* (1979), offers a comprehensive and humorous exposé of Montreal’s sex industry in lengthy testimonies from sex workers, queer and transgender people, clients, a pimp, and police officers. Recorded after the “Hutt” decision, the film shows how street-based sex work greatly varied according to geographic location, economic background, gender identities, and sexual orientation.²²

Because the “Hutt” decision undermined the Police Department’s ability to enforce soliciting laws, officers resorted to a street regulating bylaw to clear streets and parks. Indeed, article 2b of Montreal’s traffic bylaw 333 allowed officers to arrest pedestrians for “strolling or loitering at night in the streets, lanes, fields, yards or other places in the City and who cannot satisfactorily account for his presence there [...]”²³ The bylaw was an adequate tool insofar as it allowed police to uphold an anti-prostitution agenda despite the “Hutt” decision or the legal hurdles placed by the Supreme Court. For instance, a *Montreal Gazette* journalist who joined

²⁰ Texier and Vézina, *Profession, prostituée*, 69-70.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 322-3.

²² See testimonies provided by pimp “Slim,” trans sex worker “Nadgia,” and madam Rita Picard in Guy Simoneau (dir.), *Plusieurs tombent en amour* (Montreal: K Films Vidéo, 1979).

²³ City of Montreal, By-law No. 333, *to prevent the obstruction of pedestrians or traffic and the disturbance of the public peace in the streets, lanes, highways and public places in the City* (19 June 1905) [as amended in December 1977].

two Morality Squad officers for a night beat along Sainte-Catherine Street – “prostitution alley” as the officers called it – reported that the officers had used it to arrest and fine several women.²⁴ A few weeks later, officers cleared the streets of twenty-six sex workers in the span of 30 minutes by enforcing it again.²⁵ Quite simply, the data shows how the department weaponized the bylaw to replace section 195 of the Criminal Code; charges under the Criminal Code decreased 89 percent from 1975 to 1979 while those under traffic bylaw 333 skyrocketed 210 percent from 1978 to 1979.²⁶ Still, a police report maintained that the Morality Squad faced persistent challenges because the traffic bylaw was only enforceable at night and in public space, which meant that police could do nothing about sex work in vehicles or nightclubs.²⁷ The following table shows the pattern of arrests under various bylaws as well as bawdy-house and prostitution laws in Montreal from 1976 to 1987.

Year	Criminal Code; Common Bawdy-House (Section 193)	Criminal Code; Soliciting or Communicating (Section 195)	Municipal Bylaw	Number of Offences
1976	371	512		
1977	351	375		
1978	183	64	Traffic Bylaw 333	?
1979	119	16	Traffic Bylaw 333	?
1980	254	25	Anti-Prostitution Bylaw 5464	?
1981	286	11	Anti-Prostitution Bylaw 5464	?
1982	98	7	Anti-Prostitution Bylaw 5464	401
1982			Traffic Bylaw 333	16

²⁴ Ray Doucet, “Morality laws look a great deal different... in dead of night,” *Montreal Gazette*, 3 May 1979.

²⁵ Pierre Daigneault (Agent Analyste, Moralité) and Claude Lalonde (Lieutenant, Moralité), “Etat de la prostitution à Montréal depuis le jugement ‘Debra Hutt’,” memorandum to the cabinet of the Director of the MUC Police Department, p.3. Dossier – Prostitution – Rencontre avec le maire de Toronto, P100-07-D106, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM.

²⁶ Ibid., 1-2. Michel Girard, “Plus question de racoler ou de boire de l’alcool dans les rues de Montréal,” *La Presse*, 27 May 1980.

²⁷ Daigneault and Lalonde, “Etat de la prostitution à Montréal depuis le jugement ‘Debra Hutt’,” 5.

1983	100	8	Anti-Prostitution Bylaw 5464	339
1983			Traffic Bylaw 333	204
1983			Anti-Soliciting Bylaw 6249	73
1984	321		Anti-Soliciting Bylaw 6249	853
1985	675		Anti-Soliciting Bylaw 6249	1,189
1986	692	1,621		
1987	299	2,335		

Source: *Robert Gemme et al., A Report on Prostitution in Quebec (Ottawa: Department of Justice, 1984), 64-6; Robert Gemme, Street Prostitution: Assessing the Impact of the Law, Montreal (Ottawa: Department of Justice, 1989), 43, 61, 106.*

Another way in which officers noticed the proliferation of the sex industry was through the prism of race and language. According to activist and founding member of the Vancouver-based Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes, Marie Arrington, Montreal's street-based sex work, like that of other Canadian cities, comprised a large number of Black and Indigenous sex workers.²⁸ During tourist season in 1979, for instance, transient Black sex workers and pimps came to Montreal from Halifax, Vancouver, Toronto, and American cities to take part in a lucrative business near the Red Light district. And as the aforementioned police report reveals, it was these English-speaking Black women and men that officers of the Morality Squad profiled and charged.²⁹ The police report, sent to the chair of the executive committee Yvon Lamarre, also claimed that transient sex workers crossed the Canadian border illegally, which piled onto the illicitness of the industry. But this assumption was debunked by a group of researchers that found that Black American sex workers were overrepresented in arrests, although they accounted for only 1.7 percent of street-based sex work. They conclude: "Thus, either this is

²⁸ Marie Arrington, "Under the Gun," in *Good Girls/Bad Girls*, ed. Laurie Bell (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1987), 174.

²⁹ Daigneault and Lalonde, "Etat de la prostitution à Montréal depuis le jugement 'Debra Hutt'," 4. See also Scott, *Station 10*.

really a marginal phenomenon following enforcement of the law, under which prostitutes are handed over to immigration authorities who deport them, or they work secretly or with false identity papers.”³⁰

The Police Department’s anti-Black racism reached the public spotlight that year for two additional reasons. First, the endemic problem of racial profiling was brought to public attention during a public consultation on the future of the department.³¹ Second, and more infamously, on the very last day of that public consultation police officers singled-out Black youths for nighttime loitering in Sainte-Bernadette Park after receiving complaints from white neighbours about Black teens lingering after a soccer game. “Why can’t Haitians stay in the park like others?” protested one youth. But this line of inquiry only led to an officer placing him under arrest. As tensions mounted between Black bystanders and police, officers started beating and verbally abusing Haitian community members with inexplicable viciousness.³² In the days and weeks that followed, Haitian community members, backed by close to two-dozen anti-racist groups, protested the department’s anti-Black racism on the streets and in court. What would become known as Le Comité du 20 juin furthered the agenda for police reform by bringing into conversation five items that could minimize police brutality and profiling: multicultural training, diversity recruitment, police and community dialogue, reform of police deontology, and reduction of discretionary powers.³³

Throughout 1979 Montreal police expressed discontent regarding the limited power it held over public space. By the end of the year Montreal chief of police Henri-Paul Vignola sent

³⁰ Gemme, *Street Prostitution*, 160-3.

³¹ Ted Rutland, *Un échec éternel : La lutte contre le profilage racial à Montréal, 1979-présent*, mémoire présenté à la Commission de la Sécurité Publique de la Ville de Montréal (22 November 2019).

³² Jean-Claude Leclerc, “Une charge de la police rue Bélanger,” *Le Devoir*, 23 June 1979.

³³ Le Comité du 20 juin, “Communiqué de presse,” 2 July 1979, 24P-630: 08: 03/1. Fonds LDL, Archives UQÀM. André Cedilot, “350 manifestants contre le racisme et la brutalité policière,” *La Presse*, 7 July 1979. Rutland, *Un échec éternel*, 6.

a letter to Yvon Lamarre requesting that the Civic Party's help in "amending the laws so that they may [...] help protect society."³⁴ This request came on the heels of a meeting between the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP) and Justice Minister Jacques Flynn, during which the CACP underlined the need for tougher "anti-prostitution laws." Vignola's request to Lamarre thus echoed this demand and reiterated police demands: eliminate the requirement to prove that solicitation had been pressing and persistent, consider a motor vehicle to be a public place, and prosecute men as well as women for soliciting.³⁵

Anti-Prostitution Bylaw 5464 and Trans-local Cooperation

The contraction and expansion of sex workers' rights during the postwar period suggested shifting ideas about the sex industry and policing in urban Canada. Whether authorities understood the industry based on gender, notions of public and private space, or temporality, each aspect influenced how sex work would be regulated. A clear example of this understanding materialized in May 1980, when Montreal passed two bylaws that gave its police department additional power over public space. Anti-prostitution bylaw 5464 and anti-drinking bylaw 5465 immediately transformed the requirements for charging someone for prostitution, public drinking, and nighttime loitering. These bylaws were purportedly enacted under the municipal powers derived from the provinces, which allowed for the regulation of street usage and the restriction of activities that encourages criminality. Once enacted, these bylaws immediately transformed the culture of the city. In fact, when the city passed the anti-drinking bylaw it disrupted the plans of the Corporation des fêtes de la Saint-Jean, the organization that planned the celebration of Quebec's national holiday. The Saint-Jean was only a few weeks

³⁴ Letter by Chief Vignola to Chair Lamarre, 27 November 1979. Dossier – Prostitution – Rencontre avec le maire de Toronto, P100-07-D106, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM. "Flynn plans move to tighten laws on prostitution, police chiefs say," *Montreal Gazette*, 27 November 1979.

³⁵ Brock, *Making Work, Making Trouble*, 50.

away, and because the bylaw prohibited public drinking and noisy activities after midnight, the Corporation was left with the dreadful task of disentangling the French-Canadian holiday from drinking. Its president sent a letter to chair Yvon Lamarre and Chief Vignola requesting tolerance and collaboration from authorities – in short, for the city to forget about the bylaw it had only just enacted. In the end, authorities decided to tolerate public drinking and noise during the fête. But since Montrealers assumed that police would enforce City Hall’s anti-drinking bylaw, the fête was “not celebrated with as much gusto as in previous years.”³⁶

The second bylaw – anti-prostitution bylaw 5464 – was not administered with the same level of flexibility. It was ruthlessly enforced, which led to many charges and arrests days after it was passed. This result pleased authorities, and because it was applied alongside the anti-drinking bylaw, they reported a significant decline in loitering, disorderly conduct, and drunkenness in the Red Light district.³⁷ Officers enforced both bylaws in the downtown area, where they allegedly dismantled another Black “American ring” of prostitution after arresting and charging dozens of Black American pimps whose networks had brought women from borderland cities like Buffalo and Detroit as well as women (familiar with Québécois snowbirds) from Florida and Georgia.³⁸ The anti-prostitution bylaw no longer required officers to prove that soliciting had been “pressing and persistent” in order to arrest and charge sex workers because it prohibited “any person to remain in a public place for purposes of prostitution or to approach another person for the same purposes in such a place.”³⁹ Although

³⁶ “La police a fermé les yeux: Des fêtes tièdes,” *La Presse*, 25 June 1980. “Lift drink ban for Fete, city asked,” *Montreal Gazette*, 10 June 1980. André Cédilot, “L’alcool banni des rues de Montréal à la St-Jean,” *La Presse*, 6 June 1980.

³⁷ “Cops’ lightning raid shakes hooker row,” *Montreal Star*, 20 July 1980. Pierre-Paul Gagné, “La prostitution à Montréal : D’abord, nettoyer la ‘Main’,” *La Presse*, 19 July 1980. “Le ‘5464’ existe toujours,” *Journal de Montréal*, 7 May 1981.

³⁸ Pierre-Paul Gagné, “La prostitution à Montréal: La ‘filière américaine’,” *La Presse*, 24 July 1980.

³⁹ City of Montreal, By-law No. 5464, *to forbid any person to remain in a public place for purposes of prostitution or to approach another person for the same purposes in such place* (26 May 1980); City of Montreal, By-law No.

the bylaw was clearly part of the administration's "beautification campaign" Yvon Lamarre dismissed accusations that his party was acting on moral grounds; he told *La Presse* that what is most important for the party is that prostitution does not take place in broad daylight, in public spaces, and at the expense of people and tourists.⁴⁰ In Montreal, like elsewhere, police tolerated "invisible" forms of prostitution (like escort services, massage and body rub parlors, and brothels) unless public complaints or concerns brought direct light onto the criminal underclass.⁴¹ Most telling was the way in which the Civic Party approached street-based sex work. Rather than respond to the economic or social factors that gave rise to it, the city allocated resources to the police and, as Lamarre told reporters, it was for the benefit of out-of-towners.

From the start, many recognized the bylaw as a flawed regulation because it punished female sex workers and – consistent with sexist laws that exempted customers from punishment – left male clients completely free from penalty.⁴² In feminist literature and in the mainstream press, women wrote pieces that challenged authorities to end the long history of prosecuting women for physical overtures: "Why are women always being policed? Why is it serious for a woman to wink at a man when men whistle at, catcall, and honk at women every single day? [...] But that's not a big deal, it's not 'soliciting.' Why are you policing our behaviour?"⁴³ One female journalist challenged a police lieutenant by asking him to explain why clients were not charged under the bylaw, but he had little to say on the subject: "it's unthinkable and illogical," he told her, "we can't charge him for paying."⁴⁴ The civil rights association Ligue des droits et

5465, *By-law amending By-law 333 entitled "By-law to prevent the obstruction of pedestrians or traffic and the disturbance of the public peace in the streets, lanes, highways and public places in the City"* (26 May 1980).

⁴⁰ "Sonia: 'On sera toujours là'," *La Presse*, 19 July 1980.

⁴¹ O'Connell, "The Impact of Bill C-49 on Street Prostitution," 120.

⁴² See Constance Backhouse, "Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law Reflection of a Discriminatory Society," *Histoire Sociale / Social History*, vol. XVIII, no. 36 (novembre-November 1985): 387-423.

⁴³ Mireille Lachance, "Et les hommes qui racolent," *La Presse*, 1 August 1980. O'Leary and Toupin, *Québécoises deboutte!*, 44.

⁴⁴ Madeleine Berthault, "Quand les hommes racolent..." *La Presse*, 21 July 1980; "Peu de clients sont arrêtés," *La Presse*, 22 July 1980.

libertés also weighed in on the debate and railed against the administration for passing a bylaw that reinforced sexist hierarchies of power and privilege. In fact, the association argued that aggressive anti-sex work policing was to blame for the problems that plagued the sex industry, which is why it set to work on challenging the bylaw in court.⁴⁵ Statements like the ones above were further echoed by academics and labour rights activists.

How, then, did sex workers react after being charged? Like many other Montrealers during this historical period they challenged authorities in court and organized. Fernande St-Martin-Poitras, who was arrested in “prostitution alley” on the night of 19 June 1980, challenged the bylaw’s legitimacy. Her case, marked by irregular and shoddy police work, reveals how court sentences often relied on unsubstantiated police accounts during trials. After being found guilty, she appealed on the grounds that she had been tried without supporting evidence and, crucially, that the bylaw was ultra vires. Municipal Court judge Bernard Tellier heard St-Martin-Poitras’s appeal in 1981, and although he ruled in her favour based on the testimonies of the initial hearing, he dismissed her ultra vires claim. In the context of this chapter perhaps the most important aspect of that decision concerned the connection between the bylaw and the Criminal Code: “The Court finds that the section of the Criminal Code deals directly with prostitution, whereas bylaw 5464 simply touches on one aspect of it – safeguarding against the proliferation of brothels, soliciting-areas or disorder and any other ill-famed space, thereby allowing citizens to exercise their right to move freely and peacefully in public space

⁴⁵ Marie-Laurence B. Beaumier, “Les voix des femmes à la Ligue des droits de l’homme du Québec : ouvertures, tensions, débats, 1963-1980,” *Travail, temps, pouvoirs et résistances* vol. 30, no. 2 (2017): 236. Pierre-Paul Gagné, “La prostitution à Montréal: La définition de ‘solicitation’ peut présenter des risques,” *La Presse*, 21 July 1980. Pierre-Paul Gagné, “La prostitution à Montréal: Des opinions divergentes,” *La Presse*, 26 July 1980.

It is important to note that the LDL began as a civil liberties association. In 1974, however, it explicitly rejected its civil libertarian roots and embraced a human rights platform. Its new mandate considered the unique problems confronting the poor, women, the elderly, youth, and minorities. In 1978 it renamed itself to reflect its “social” mandate, thereby stepping away from its original “legal” origins. Clément, *Human Rights in Canada*, 95.

and on city streets, in particular.”⁴⁶ Concurrent with that challenge was an increased discussion of sex workers’ rights. For example, two transgender sex workers, Jennifer Tracey and Danielle Hurley, formed Calling Out Against Discrimination (COAD), a paralegal defence group for Montreal’s sex industry that supported about three dozen sex workers and drew attention to police misconduct. COAD exposed how sex workers were arrested for loitering without having been ordered to keep moving; it revealed that police kept women in holding cells for weeks before standing trial; and it shed light on officers’ sexual misconducts during interrogations. Above all, COAD informed sex workers about legal rights and encouraged them to plead not guilty, fight charges in court, and appeal convictions.⁴⁷

For months women seized editorial space and mocked the way that authorities understood, and ruled, public space through a sexist framework. In the most evocative piece – published in both *Le Devoir* and *La Presse* – six feminists penned an open letter to city councillors ridiculing the gendered experience of modern public (night)life. The humorous letter, written after councillors claimed to have been harassed by sex workers on Saint-Laurent Boulevard, poked at the administration’s unchanging attitude about the place of women in society. It spun a line of question usually reserved for women who, victims of harassment, were asked about clothes, being in public space after dark, and sexual partners. It mocked police work and twisted warnings characteristically reserved for women: “In our society this kind of inconvenience is inevitable for men. You shouldn’t expect to be able to wander, day and night, on any street without taking risks. It’s up to you to take the necessary precautions. In order to

⁴⁶ *Fernande St-Martin-Poitras v. City of Montreal* [1981] Montreal Municipal Court, 10.

⁴⁷ Harvey Shepherd, “‘Hookers’ unite to fight bylaw,” *Montreal Gazette*, 10 September 1980. “Prostitutes to fight new law,” *The Record*, 9 September 1980. See also Crago interview with Miss Pat, “Sex Work,” 23.

gain more confidence, you should take self-defense classes.”⁴⁸ As criticisms piled, city administrators continued to claim that the bylaw had transformed the streets of Montreal into harassment-free zones. By the end of 1980 one Civic Party councillor claimed that because of the anti-prostitution bylaw, residents could “walk on any street at any given hour without the fear of being harassed by these undesirables.”⁴⁹

However, the police faced persistent issues when administering it: figuring which women were sex workers and what to do about male clients. Police had been profiling women with mixed results in the Red Light district and because soliciting had not dropped as much as authorities had wanted, it had led to myriad complaints. Upset Sainte-Catherine Street merchants complained that prostitutes drove away better clientele and attracted less desirable customers. Meanwhile female students, office workers, and “honest” housewives revealed being harassed and intimidated by men who catcalled and offered money for sex. Amidst public pressure to curtail male soliciting and entrap “sex-hungry men,” the Police Department placed undercover policewomen in the district. The ruse proved to be successful since the department arrested eighteen men within two hours. But in a frustrating twist, the entrapped “Johns” were never prosecuted because they fell outside the anti-prostitution bylaw’s purview. As a city lawyer reminded reporters, “the law was brought in to clear the streets of prostitutes, not clients.”⁵⁰ It was clear that the city’s position was based on male norms of reason and respectability. Rather than targeting all segments of the sex industry, authorities focused on women who offered sex, but not men who searched for and bought it.

⁴⁸ Lise Dunnigan (Ste-Foy), Anne Gauthier (Québec), Francine Saillant (Québec), Nicole Cloutier (Rosemont), Suzanne Messier (Québec), Maria De Koninck (Lac St-Charles), “Comment pouvoir circuler seul!,” *Le Devoir*, 8 August 1980. “Du sort réservé aux filles,” *La Presse*, 14 August 1980. “La grande peur de nos notables,” *La Presse*, 21 August 1980.

⁴⁹ L.A. MacDonald, “Bylaw pushes prostitutes out,” *Sunday Express*, 2 November 1980.

⁵⁰ “City won’t press charges against men for soliciting,” *Montreal Gazette*, 15 December 1980. “Police enforcing bylaw despite legal challenges,” *Montreal Gazette*, 11 November 1980.

The fact that the bylaw only applied to women made it an easy legal target for civil rights groups. By the end of 1980, sex worker Johanne Meli – who had been arrested during a crackdown in prostitution alley – challenged the bylaw at the Quebec Superior Court on the grounds that it was vague and gave police discretionary and discriminatory powers.⁵¹ Although the Superior Court ruled in favour of the City of Montreal, the legal challenge forced city administrators to amend it. Fearing that it might reach the Supreme Court, the city changed it so that clients would face penalties too – fines of up to \$1,000.⁵² Although female sex workers would still bear the brunt of police harassment, the amendment was widely recognized as a good thing because it no longer discriminated based on gender.⁵³ A few weeks later, on the night of 29 June 1981, the Morality Squad orchestrated a crackdown during which it arrested seven sex workers (male and female) and issued one-hundred-dollar fines to two male clients.⁵⁴

As these developments unfolded Canadian municipal leaders held discussions to quell the proliferation of street-based sex work. In fact, about a week after Montreal adopted its bylaw in 1980, municipal leaders voted on a proposal to pressure the federal government to amend the Criminal Code’s prostitution clause.⁵⁵ Although this proposal was rejected, it set the tone for a long legal battle that pitted municipal authorities, federal lawmakers, and sex work activists against one another. In late-July 1981 Mayor Drapeau and Toronto Mayor Art Eggleton met to discuss economic development, housing, energy, and federal-municipal relations (fig. 20). But at the top of the agenda for the day-long meeting was “prostitution and street nuisances,” which

⁵¹ “‘Hooker’ bylaw challenged,” *Montreal Gazette*, 7 November 1980. Anne Penketh, “Prostitution law opponent clears a legal hurdle,” *Montreal Gazette*, 24 December 1980.

⁵² “Prostitutes’ clients hit as city tightens law,” *Montreal Gazette*, 16 June 1981. Yvon Laberge, “Prostitution: le règlement amendé,” *La Presse*, 17 June 1981.

⁵³ “Tinkering with sex laws,” *Montreal Gazette*, 17 June 1981. Leo Nasager, “It is about time ladies got a break,” *Montreal Gazette*, 30 July 1981.

⁵⁴ Raymond Gervais, “Le nouveau règlement 5464: Deux clients de prostituées appréhendés par la police,” *La Presse*, 1 July 1981.

⁵⁵ Harvey Shepherd, “Municipalities disagree on issue of prostitution,” *Montreal Gazette*, 11 June 1980.

included presentations by police officers and city lawyers. The mayors believed that by combining their clout as the mayors of Canada's two largest cities they could pressure the federal government to adopt stricter rules against prostitution, especially against "homosexual prostitution."⁵⁶ As both mayors dealt with the same problem, they tackled it on different geographic scales; Montreal's sex industry was scattered across the Red Light district and downtown while Toronto's was mostly along and near Yonge Street, where people could witness a concentration of all forms of sex.⁵⁷



Figure 20: Mayor Eggleton of Toronto (left) and Mayor Drapeau (right). 31 July 1981, P833, S2, D1810, Fonds La Presse, BAnQ.

⁵⁶ Official meeting between mayor Art Eggleton of Toronto, and Mayor Jean Drapeau of Montreal, to be held in Montreal on Friday, July 31, 1981. Dossier – Prostitution – Rencontre avec le maire de Toronto, P100-07-D106, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM. “Prostitution: Mayors ask tougher law,” *Montreal Gazette*, 1 August 1981.

⁵⁷ Mayor Eggleton's presentation reiterated what he had said a few months earlier in Regina: “This problem in the City of Toronto has had a serious affect upon the reputation of our main street – Yonge Street – and on neighbourhoods nearby.” Art Eggleton, “Prostitution and Street Nuisances,” 9 June 1981, Dossier – Prostitution – Rencontre avec le maire de Toronto, P100-07-D106, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM. See Daniel Ross, *The Heart of Toronto: Corporate Power, Civic Activism, and the Remaking of Downtown Yonge Street* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2022), 105.

But as municipal leaders campaigned for stricter laws, sex workers continued to challenge bylaws that were already in place. At the height of summer in 1981 sex worker Wesley Krehbiel challenged Montreal's anti-prostitution bylaw at the Quebec Superior Court, arguing that it was in the purview of criminal law and therefore acted beyond the city's jurisdiction. Krehbiel had been arrested downtown near Dominion Square as part of a police offense against an allegedly "homosexual prostitution ring." Although there is scarce evidence that any of the downtown spots (like bathhouses, nightclubs, and bars) served as fronts for prostitution, police officers used the bylaw to intimidate patrons.⁵⁸ Clearly, then, police officers continued to prosecute Montreal's gay community long after amendments were made to the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms to include sexual orientation as a prohibited ground for discrimination.

A few months later another sex worker, Risa Goldwax – who was arrested on the night of 16 September 1980 for soliciting on the steps of the Sheraton-Mont Royal Hotel – was heard at the Quebec Superior Court. While Goldwax did not challenge any of the evidence or facts that had led to her arrest, she and her lawyer also argued that the bylaw was ultra vires.⁵⁹ On 10 December 1981 the court recognized that the bylaw, in fact, was ultra vires and in his ruling Justice Gérald Ryan declared: "The pith and substance of bylaw 5464 remains the regulation of the exercise of the profession of prostitution which is not prohibited by the competent authority, that is, Parliament. In my humble view, the City of Montreal, through its bylaw 5464, is legislating on criminal matters."⁶⁰ Nevertheless, Goldwax would return to court two years later after the city appealed the decision and made one last attempt to make the fight against

⁵⁸ Pierre-Paul Gagné, "La prostitution à Montréal: Les homosexuels parlent de préjugés ... et crient à l'injustice," *La Presse*, 25 July 1980.

⁵⁹ *Risa Goldwax v. City of Montréal* [1981] Q.S.C., 7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

prostitution its own. In the meantime, as litigation made its way through the courts, the bylaw continued to be enforced. As a journalist of the *Montreal Gazette* remarked, Montreal's anti-prostitution bylaw was the envy of police forces across Canada because, in the words of the one twenty-one-year-old sex worker, it allowed police to "come down really hard on us."⁶¹ "That bylaw has kept our prostitute population down quite a bit," a detective of the Montreal Morality Squad stated. "We have had a few girls in from Buffalo, and as soon as they found out about this bylaw, they got on their horses and rode on."⁶²

Throughout 1982 couriers carried letters back and forth between Canadian city mayors who mostly echoed Drapeau's wish to find a solution to the increasing visibility of sex work on city streets. In February Vancouver Mayor Michael Harcourt wrote to Justice Minister Jean Chrétien on behalf of Canadian mayors requesting that the federal government amend the Criminal Code so that street prostitution could be curtailed; his letter was supported by Jean Drapeau and the mayors of Edmonton, Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto, Quebec City, and Halifax. And several weeks after sending the letter, Vancouver, like Montreal and Calgary, adopted an anti-prostitution bylaw too.⁶³ Alongside this general consensus regarding municipal governance, however, emerged one remarkable voice of opposition. It came from Ottawa mayor Marion Dewar who, after consulting with several feminist organizations, concluded that the Criminal Code's prostitution clause should be removed outright.⁶⁴

Anti-Soliciting Bylaw 6249 and Amendments to the Criminal Code

⁶¹ "City has thirty days to appeal decision on prostitution bylaw," *Montreal Gazette*, 12 December 1981.

⁶² Michael Tenzsen, "Montreal police set back in war on prostitutes," *Globe and Mail*, 29 December 1981.

⁶³ Dossier – Prostitution, P100-07-D105, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM.

⁶⁴ Letter from Marion Dewar to Jean Drapeau, 23 June 1982, dossier – Prostitution, P100-07-D105, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM

In 1982 Jean Drapeau suffered physical setbacks. In February he slipped and broke his hip in the underground parking at City Hall and in July he had a stroke, which left his left-side partially paralyzed. Despite these personal struggles, the mayor believed that he was still fit to complete another four-year term. Probably unsure whether it would be his last campaign, he ran for mayor during that year's election. And for the first time since 1957 he failed to secure the majority of votes in what was the biggest turnout in Montreal's electoral history (55 percent of the city's 700,000 eligible voters). Unlike 1957, however, he remained in power; Jean Doré (MCM) and ex-chief of police Henri-Paul Vignola (MAG) split 51 percent of votes.⁶⁵

Several weeks after the municipal election the legal battle over which jurisdiction should exercise its powers to deal with prostitution escalated when a case involving Calgary's anti-prostitution bylaw reached the Supreme Court of Canada. Calgary lawyers cited Montreal's anti-demonstration bylaw to argue that bylaws – whether to curb prostitution or protests – were based on the same governing principle.⁶⁶ But the Supreme Court justices noted that it was a logical fallacy to equate the two, stating that Montreal's anti-demonstration bylaw was a temporary tool (lasting thirty days when enacted) and that it concerned parades and assemblies, obviously different from prostitution.⁶⁷ On 25 January 1983 the Supreme Court sided with appellant sex worker Lenore Jacqueline (Jackie) Westendorp and struck down the Calgary bylaw as being an attempt by the city to enact criminal sanctions, something within exclusive federal jurisdiction. The ruling set a precedent that would impact Montreal several months later.

During the early- to mid-1980s two factors gave rise to intense sex activism in Canada. First, translocal anti-prostitution politics created a growing movement for sex workers rights.

⁶⁵ The Municipal Action Group (MAG) was born from a bitter split between radicals and moderates within the MCM in 1976. See Milner, "The Montreal Citizens' Movement," 3.

⁶⁶ Calgary "The Street" bylaw 9022, first enacted in 1974, was amended by city council on 25 June 1981.

⁶⁷ *Westendorp v. the Queen* [1983] 1 S.C.R. 43.

This emerged not only out of challenges to local bylaws but also out of mainstream stigma and precarious labour conditions. The shared experience of police repression during the late-1970s was a key factor in the advent of Canada's first organized sex worker advocacy group in Toronto, BEAVER (Better End All Vicious Erotic Repression). Like its American counterpart COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics), BEAVER called for the decriminalization of prostitution and campaigned to sever sex work from its historical association with sin, crime, and illicit sex by positioning it firmly in the discourse of work, choice, and civil rights.⁶⁸ Over the following years other rights groups emerge, like the Vancouver-based Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes (1982) – which established a pimp-free zone and was profiled in the NFB film *Hookers on Davie* (1984) – and another Toronto-based group, the Canadian Organization for the Rights of Prostitutes (CORP) founded in 1983.⁶⁹ Cognizant of the profession's history, CORP criticized politicians for enabling local police departments to use force; “The law forces us into the gutter and then punishes us for being there,” it reasoned.⁷⁰ Over the following years CORP would fight for the decriminalization of prostitution and the legalization of sex work. In Montreal informal groups like La Piaule and PIAMP (or PIMP, a project to assist juvenile sex workers) had free and around-the-clock facilities to welcome street-based sex workers.⁷¹

Second, sex activism emerged out of the community-based need to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In Montreal activism materialized in response to social discrimination and media prejudice against gays, Haitians, Indigenous peoples, injection-drug users, and sex

⁶⁸ Ross, *The Heart of Toronto*, 131. Valerie Jenness, “From Sex as Sin to Sex as Work: COYOTE and the Reorganization of Prostitution as a Social Problem,” *Social Problems* vol. 37, no. 3 (August 1990): 403-20.

⁶⁹ See Holly Dale and Janis Cole (dirs.), *Hookers on Davie* (Vancouver: Spectrum Films, 1984).

⁷⁰ The Canadian Organization for the Rights of Prostitutes (now Sex Professionals of Canada) pamphlet, 10-001-S1-F418_a, CWMA, UOASC.

⁷¹ Robert Gemme et al., *A Report on Prostitution in Quebec* (Ottawa: Department of Justice, 1984), 88, 309-10.

workers.⁷² For the most part, as queer historian and organizer Gary Kinsman recalls, this activism developed in response to state inaction.⁷³ In fact, throughout the early-1980s all of the necessary energy to deal with the epidemic came from affected communities. Gay men, for instance, implemented “safer sex” to promote survival, fight stigmatization, encourage community development, and raise self-esteem. Necessary information about the virus was distributed by activist organizations like the Montreal AIDS Resource Committee, a division of Gay Montreal that was founded in January 1984.⁷⁴ Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s the epidemic completely transformed the disco-all-night ethos and anything-goes sexual attitudes. Moreover, the epidemic gave impetus to authorities to force sexually active women and men to undergo compulsory HIV tests, which provided moral reformers a facile connection to make between hygiene and sex and opened space for a discourse around the need for cleanup campaigns.⁷⁵

As sex workers organized and distributed pamphlets, and as gay activists and racialized community members responded to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the mayors of major Canadian cities met in early-June 1983. On this occasion Montreal played host to a day-long private meeting where mayors aired their grievances about public displays of hard-core pornography and sex work. “We’re joining our efforts to get Criminal Code amendments to help keep our cities clean,” Mayor Drapeau told members of the press, and emphasized that the goal was to

⁷² Viviane K. Namaste, *Savoirs créoles : leçons du sida pour l’histoire de Montréal* (Montreal: Mémoire d’encrier, 2019). Nicholas Giguère, “‘Assister, informer, défendre’: Le *Virulent* (1986-1989?), bulletin du Comité Sida Aide Montréal (C-SAM) et outil de lutte contre le VIH et le sida,” in *Québequeer : le queer dans les productions littéraires, artistiques et médiatiques québécoises*, ed. Isabelle Boisclair, Pierre-Luc Landry, and Guillaume Girard (Montreal: Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 2020), 153-4.

⁷³ Gary Kinsman, “AIDS Activism: Remembering Resistance versus Socially Organized Forgetting,” in *Seeing Red: HIV/AIDS and Public Policy in Canada*, ed. Michael Orsini, Marilou Gagnon, and Suzanne Hindmarch (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 317-9.

⁷⁴ Ann Silversides, *AIDS Activist: Michael Lynch and the Politics of Community* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003), 99.

⁷⁵ Maria Nengeh Mensah, “The Idea of Community and Collective Action: Reflections on Forum XXX,” in *Sex Work: Rethinking the Job, Respecting the Workers*, ed. Louise Toupin et al., (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 94.

create a united front so that the federal government would act.⁷⁶ Throughout this period sexual entertainment had become big business, increasingly mass produced, commoditized, and subject to market norms of content and price, which is why Canadian mayors attacked all aspects of it.⁷⁷ Beyond city officials, opposition to the sex industry manifested itself in the emergence of a feminist anti-pornography movement, which viewed the industry as violent and misogynist propaganda (fig. 21). At times the anti-pornography crusade, itself, turned violent. For instance, a group that called itself The Wimmin's Fire Brigade orchestrated nighttime firebombs of Vancouver sex shops. "We are not the property of men to be used and abused," it declared in a subsequent statement.⁷⁸



Figure 21: Montreal feminists during an anti-pornography rally. Denis Courville, "14 juin 1984," P833, S5, D1984-0269_004, Fonds La Presse, BAnQ.

⁷⁶ Harvey Shepherd, "Major-city mayors unite against porn," *Montreal Gazette*, 6 June 1983. "Huit grandes villes du Canada, dont Montréal, veulent étoffer leurs règlements municipaux," *La Presse*, 7 June 1983.

⁷⁷ Ross, *The Heart of Toronto*, 101.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Alison Mary Virginia Hearn, "The Feminist Debate About Pornography in Canada," (M.A. thesis (Communication) Simon Fraser University, 1987), 27-31.

The mayors reconvened a week later at a summit in Moncton and reiterated the need for the federal government to act on matters of prostitution and hard-core pornography.⁷⁹ This time, however, the outcome was almost instantaneous. In mid-June 1983, the federal government established a special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution (the Fraser Committee) to hear from and examine competing views on the place of prostitution and pornography in Canada. As sociologist Deborah R. Brock argues, although the committee's position started on the premise that gender inequality and sexual exploitation are part of Canadian society, it rapidly transformed into a contemporary example of hegemony in action.⁸⁰ In fact, Jean-Paul Gilbert – who led crackdowns on the sex industry as Montreal chief of police from 1965 to 1970 – acted as one of the seven commissioners after having re-established himself as a professor of criminology at the Université de Montréal.

Because the special committee involved old friends it allowed Mayor Drapeau to remain bullish about the city's stance on its anti-prostitution bylaw and against sex work more generally. Drapeau argued that “the bylaw regulates the use of Montreal streets and sidewalks and that, as such, it does not create an offence like Calgary's bylaw.”⁸¹ But behind closed doors, and like a seasoned chess player who could see several moves ahead, Mayor Drapeau knew that after the Supreme Court had struck down Calgary's anti-prostitution bylaw a similar fate was in store for Montreal's own, which is why he had lawyers prepare the paperwork for another anti-prostitution bylaw.

In October 1983 the city enacted anti-soliciting bylaw 6249, which disguised anti-prostitution clauses into traffic and disturbance bylaw 333 and muddled the meaning of

⁷⁹ “Clearing the Streets,” *Montreal Gazette*, 14 June 1983.

⁸⁰ Brock, *Making Work, Making Trouble*, 65.

⁸¹ “Règlement de Montréal: La Cour Suprême entendra la cause d'une prostituée,” *Le Devoir*, 22 February 1983.

“obstruction” and “disturbances” in public space.⁸² Later, Drapeau would claim that anti-soliciting bylaw 6249 did not constitute an attempt to control or punish prostitution per se. Rather, it concerned the occupancy of the public space and was enacted as a mechanism to clampdown on unauthorized commercial activity on city streets. He stated that it was created to protect “the right of people who don’t want to be solicited on the streets,” and emphasized that he was annoyed by reports of loud restaurateurs advertising menus and thieves peddling stolen goods in public space.⁸³ But the data shows that it was all smoke and mirrors. Within the first few months, four hundred sex workers accounted for 90 percent of those charged under this new bylaw. Marie Arrington of the Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes was told that officers enforced the bylaw ruthlessly. Police drove past sex workers, and a van followed: “The policeman says, ‘Hi! How are you?’ to the women that are working and drives on. Then the paddywagon [*sic*] comes and charges the women with soliciting. In court it’s the policeman’s word against theirs.”⁸⁴ Meanwhile, the remaining 10 percent of those charged under the anti-soliciting bylaw somewhat reflected Drapeau’s official statement as individuals had been charged for selling fruits, vegetables, and ice-cream along sidewalks.⁸⁵

The city’s latest anti-sex work bylaw reenergized civil rights groups, lawyers, and political opponents. In newspapers the Ligue des droits et libertés reasoned that the bylaw was a structural power grab that gave police too much autonomy.⁸⁶ Lawyers expressed similar mistrust

⁸² City of Montreal, By-law No. 6249, *to prevent the obstruction of pedestrians or traffic and the disturbance of the public peace in the streets, lanes, highways and public places in the City* (17 October 1983).

A year later seven judges of the Supreme Court struck down bylaw 5464 in a swift and decisive ruling because it infringed on the exclusive federal responsibility for dealing with prostitution. “Supreme Court of Canada quashes Montreal’s old anti-prostitution bylaw,” *Montreal Gazette*, 13 December 1984.

⁸³ *Presentation of the City of Montréal to the Legislative Committee on Bill C-49 submitted by Jean Drapeau*, 29 October 1985, p. 3-4, dossier – Prostitution, P100-07-D105, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM. Harvey Shepherd, “Prostitution clampdown main aim of new bylaw,” *Montreal Gazette*, 18 October 1983.

⁸⁴ Marie Arrington, “Under the Gun,” in *Good Girls/Bad Girls*, ed. Laurie Bell (Toronto: The Women’s Press, 1987), 178.

⁸⁵ Rod Macdonell, “Bylaw works against prostitutes: About 400 charges laid since fall,” *Montreal Gazette*, 9 July 1984. Yves Hamel, “Sexe et crème glacée,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 27 July 1984.

⁸⁶ Serge Labrosse, “Prostitution : un règlement déguisé,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 19 October 1983.

and commented on its wording: “[It] is so vague,” they stated, “it gives police the power to arrest a man for introducing himself to a woman on the street.”⁸⁷ And the opposition at City Hall saw it as the latest in a series of bylaws that transformed police work into petty “baby-sitting,” which led councillor Sam Boskey to criticize the Civic Party’s beautification campaign: “Residents have petitioned the city to carry out specific actions within municipal jurisdiction, such as improving lighting, creating no-parking zones, changing street directions, increasing the frequency of police patrol – and the administration has not lifted a finger. Instead, we get a repressive bylaw that applies to the whole city.”⁸⁸ For Montreal chief of police André De Luca, however, the anti-soliciting bylaw offered his department an effective tool with which to combat street-based sex work. In fact, not only did he defend it at a Fraser Committee hearing, but he expressed a desire for stronger federal laws to suppress street prostitution. Although the Police Department issued hundreds of charges relating to soliciting for the purposes of prostitution in 1983 and 1984, De Luca argued that the lack of power to arrest and detain under municipal bylaws allowed sex workers to wander in public after being charged; it was a veritable “cat-and-mouse game,” he bemoaned.⁸⁹

One area that had become a hotspot for the sex industry was Carré Saint-Louis.⁹⁰ The transformation of the square – from a site for bohemians, protestors, students, and intellectuals to one for sex – can be traced back to the mid-1950s when the municipal administration bulldozed the Red Light district’s infrastructure. Because sex workers were pushed to the streets

⁸⁷ “Bylaw to fight prostitution ‘is too vague,’” *Montreal Gazette*, 22 October 1983. “Montréal truffe ses règlements anti-prostitution de trucs,” *Le Devoir*, 21 October 1983.

⁸⁸ Sam Boskey, “New Montreal bylaw poses threat to civil liberties,” *Montreal Gazette*, 26 October 1983. Le comité sur la police, “Exposé du RCM devant le conseil de sécurité publique,” 13 June 1979, 24P-630: 08: 03/1. Fonds LDL, Archives UQÀM.

⁸⁹ Fraser, *Pornography and Prostitution in Canada*, 447. David Johnston, “Soliciting law virtually worthless: Police Chief,” *Montreal Gazette*, 28 February 1984.

⁹⁰ Angèle Dagenais, “Les résidents du square Saint-Louis sonnent l’alarme : La prostitution et le commerce de la drogue ont atteint un seuil intolérable,” *Le Devoir*, 9 May 1984. Carole Thibaudeau, “Les résidents du quartier Saint-Louis en ont ras le bol des fêtards et des prostituées,” *La Presse*, 9 May 1984.

(especially following city-wide raids on nightspots during the late-1960s) they sought new areas where they could solicit without worrying about disrupting formal commercial activity or the business and wealthy class. By the late-1970s about two dozen sex workers had found the quieter residential districts near La Fontaine Park and Carré Saint-Louis more convenient, the result being that by night these spaces became playgrounds for heterosexual men and were shaped by the interactions between women's labour and male desire. This development drove nearby residents and office workers absolutely mad about the sex industry. In letters and petitions sent to authorities (including the mayor, the police chief, the crown attorney, directors of the Morality Squad, and the Quebec Minister of Justice), residents expressed profound concern about the new geography of sex work and envisaged the decline and decay of residential neighbourhoods. "For about six months," wrote one family to Mayor Drapeau, "it has been impossible to drive on our street, and even in front of our home, without witnessing people selling themselves at all time of the day or night."⁹¹ The mayor remained adamant, however, and responded to such complaints by recalling the war he had waged against the industry in the 1950s and pledged to make Montreal "safer," as he had done in the past.⁹²

But indignant residents claimed that the problem started with the cleanup campaign in the Red Light district and downtown, which shifted the geography of sex work to residential areas. This shift, they continued, also brought and nourished other forms of criminal activity to their neighbourhood, like drug dealing, robberies, and alcohol consumption. Similar to other anti-prostitution campaigns of that era citizens described themselves as concerned parents and taxpayers, which reflected their social backgrounds and the rhetorical positions they adopted in

⁹¹ Letter from Nanci, Patrick, Luc, & André Gervais, residents of 3718 Laval to Jean Drapeau, 24 February 1984, dossier – Prostitution, P100-07-D105, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM. Lysiane Gagnon, "Sur les trottoirs de Montréal," *La Presse*, 30 April 1983. Monelle Saindon, "Les homosexuels du parc Lafontaine : une race qui disparaît?," *Le Journal de Montréal*, 23 July 1983.

⁹² Most letters were sent between September 1983 to May 1986. Jean Drapeau letter to Marc-André Gratton, 29 November 1983, dossier – Prostitution, P100-07-D105, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM.

their letters.⁹³ They saw themselves as victims and claimed that the sex industry brought added traffic, loitering, noise, and vice. Ultimately, residents opined that if police had not disrupted the sex industry in commercial zones their neighbourhood would have remained “peaceful” and “safe.” Monica Berger, wife of Liberal MP David Berger, was one of these concerned citizens. Speaking from her affluent home overlooking Carré Saint-Louis she told *Maclean's* that she and her neighbours had formed an action committee to reduce traffic in the area.⁹⁴ If traffic could be reduced, they hypothesized, then there would be fewer clients for sex workers – thus forcing the women to leave. The city welcomed this strategy and applied it as a short-term solution. It diverted traffic and reversed one-ways so that drivers could no longer lap Carré Saint-Louis or prowl the area looking for sex. All streets between Saint-Laurent Boulevard and Saint-Denis Street were rerouted into northbound one-ways, which led to a 90 percent drop in automobile traffic.⁹⁵

Incidentally, it was the anxiety over sex in Carré Saint-Louis that galvanized the political career of Jean Doré. The telegenic, charismatic, and bilingual labour lawyer had cut his teeth in student politics during the late-1960s and, prior to municipal politics, he served as a Parti Québécois press attaché for René Lévesque. In 1984, two years before the municipal election, the soon-to-be mayor of Montreal won a seat on council and became leader of the opposition at City Hall after running a meticulous campaign that vowed to curb street prostitution in the district. Doré spent considerable time hearing from disconcerted women who described the deterioration of their neighbourhood. They could not walk near Carré Saint-Louis, they claimed, because clients and sex workers alike routinely mistook them for prostitutes.⁹⁶ Once elected he

⁹³ See Ross, *The Heart of Toronto*, 110.

⁹⁴ Robert Miller, “Sex on Mean Street,” *Maclean's*, 15 April 1985.

⁹⁵ Raymond Gervais, “La nouvelle arme contre la prostitution... le sens unique!,” *La Presse*, 26 October 1984. Gemme, *Street Prostitution*, 142.

⁹⁶ Lewis Harris, “Prostitution biggest issue as Dore bids for seat,” *Montreal Gazette*, 26 May 1984.

helped orchestrate a crackdown in the area, which shifted the geography of street-based sex work back to the Red Light district.⁹⁷ Indeed, groups all across the political spectrum – from the police to liberal-minded action committees and from the conservative Civic Party to the left-libertarian MCM – supported the crackdown on the sex industry. “If this goes on we’ll just keep moving them until they go right off the tip of the island and then they’ll have to do business in the Saint-Lawrence River,” joked the chief of the local police station.⁹⁸

In 1984, after successfully defending the anti-soliciting bylaw at the Superior Court,⁹⁹ the city administered it and the bawdy-house legislation with uncompromising force in preparation for the long-awaited papal visit. This process started in May when officers raided two gay bars, Quai Quête and Aux Bécosses, and arrested nearly two hundred men.¹⁰⁰ The most infamous raid, however, occurred in June and involved fifty Morality Squad officers. That night, in the dark, smoky first-floor disco-bar Bud’s, officers entered and arrested 188 clients and employees under the bawdy-house legislation. As the city prepared to host world travellers for the pilgrimage – and as it had done for past “megaevents” – it refined its image. Indeed, the event was painfully reminiscent of the pre-Olympic raids and as one anonymous source reported, the feeling of shock, fear, anger, and bitterness was identical. Police kept the men in custody for fourteen hours and charged them with being found-ins at a common bawdy-house

⁹⁷ David Johnston, “Montreal bylaw new weapon against prostitution: Other cities may copy cleanup idea,” *Montreal Gazette*, 27 October 1984. Picard, *Ma vie dans les bordels*, 118.

⁹⁸ “Only tougher federal laws will beat hookers: City officials,” *Montreal Gazette*, 22 September 1984.

⁹⁹ Mario Clermont claimed that the bylaw was ultra vires because it was aimed at soliciting for purposes of prostitution. He also suggested that it was illogical to prohibit unlicensed sale of services for which no license existed or could be issued. *Clermont v. The Queen* [April 1984].

¹⁰⁰ Montreal anthropologist Ross Higgins understands the period from 1980 to 1994 as a distinct chapter in the city’s attempt to regulate queer life because of the brutal raids at Sauna David, Bud’s, and KOX/Katacombes. See Ross Higgins, “La régulation sociale de l’homosexualité. De la répression policière à la normalisation,” in *La régulation sociale des minorités sexuelles: l’inquiétude de la différence*, eds. Patrice Corriveau and Valérie Daoust (Montreal: Presses de l’Université du Québec), 90-93. Ross Higgins, “Les gais dans les maisons de débauche: Montréal épurée pour la visite du Saint-Père,” *Sortir*, (May 1984), 18-9.

and for gross indecency. In response, and like the 1977 Truxx raid, community pushback was instantaneous.



Figure 22: One thousand protesters took to the streets after the raid at Bud's. The placards read: "Quick, build more prisons 'cause there's another five hundred thousand of us!" and "Repeal the bawdy house laws!" Armand Trottier, "3 juin 1984," P833, S5, D1984-0246 _007, Fonds La Presse, BAnQ.

The Association pour les droits des gais et lesbiennes du Québec (ADGQ) organized and held a demonstration the following night. About one thousand protesters rallied downtown to support a full judicial inquiry into systematic discrimination based on sexual orientation (fig. 22). Daniel Gravel of the ADGQ understood the crackdown as a pre-papal cleanup campaign and told the *Montreal Gazette*: "There was a major sweep before Expo 67 and one before the Olympic Games." For community members the connection was easy to make; civic reforms, cleanup campaigns, and megaevents, each had been grounds for police to crackdown on gay nightspots. Under the watchful eyes of armed riot police the crowd marched east along Sainte-Catherine Street toward what was slowly starting to become the new Gay Village. Protestors

chanted and brought traffic to a halt, which gave the impression of a “very large demonstration.”¹⁰¹

Then, in late-July – and perhaps supercharged by a Quebec Court of Appeal ruling that upheld Montreal’s anti-soliciting bylaw – the Police Department orchestrated a crackdown on the Red Light district to cleanup crime and prostitution.¹⁰² Over the span of two nights, officers questioned 155 suspected sex workers, pimps, burglars, and drug dealers and arrested twenty-five on various charges: armed robbery, possession of drugs, obstructing police work, and breaking bail and parole conditions.¹⁰³ The crackdown marked the last time that Mayor Drapeau and the Civic Party orchestrated a cleanup campaign before a “megaevent.” The city set the scene for Pope John Paul II’s Apostolic Visit and what would be the largest religious pilgrimage in Canadian history. On 11 September the Pope delivered mass at Jarry Park and, despite the rainy weather, a crowd of 350,000 flocked to him.

During the ensuing months, outlets continued to report that Montreal streets remained a battleground between police and sex workers. According to reports, Black, white, and Indigenous women from New York, Buffalo, Philadelphia, Vancouver, Toronto, and Frobisher Bay worked on Montreal streets. The industry was propped up by organized crime, including influential Quebec biker gangs, which recruited girls and young women from different towns and moved them from community to community (around the United States and Canada). Many

¹⁰¹ Claudia Cattaneo, “Homosexuals protest 188 bar arrests,” *Montreal Gazette*, 4 June 1984. Paul Roy, “Les gais manifestant contre l’arrestation des ‘188 du Bud’s’,” *La Presse*, 4 June 1984. Robin J. Douglas, “The night they raided Bud’s,” *The Body Politic*, September 1984, 13-5. Paul Roy, “La police fait 188 arrestations dans un bar gai de la rue Stanley,” *La Presse*, 3 June 1984.

¹⁰² Léopold Lizotte, “Le règlement municipal déclaré valide,” *La Presse*, 21 July 1984. Rene Laurent, “Court upholds city’s bylaw on prostitution,” *Montreal Gazette*, 21 July 1984

¹⁰³ Carole Thibaudeau, “Une vaste opération de police,” *La Presse*, 26 July 1984. Pierre Schneider, “Razzia chez les prostituées 60 personnes interceptées,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 26 July 1984. David Johnston, “Police dragnet rounds up 150 near ‘The Main’,” *Montreal Gazette*, 27 July 1984. André Noël, “La police fait sentir sa présence au centre-ville,” *La Presse*, 28 July 1984.

sex workers benefited from the protection of these hard-edged gangs because they ran a racket that, unlike the one offered by pimps, worked in collusion with the police.¹⁰⁴ Here is how sex worker Miss Pat recalled the arrangement:

Back then, bikers made you pay “protection” downtown. “Protection” is a strong word through [*sic*] because they were never there when it was you and a trick in a tourist room. It was more of a management fee. There was a restaurant downstairs from the Miami tourist room and if you got taken away to jail, they’d come and pick you up and if you had a bad trick, they’d take care of him. We paid \$100 a week and outside girls from Ottawa and Halifax paid up to \$100 a day. They never harassed the women for sex though.¹⁰⁵

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s local and out-of-town sex workers paid an eye-watering fee to gangs so they could work downtown and, in return, bikers paid the police to leave them alone. This set up was important for women of colour, particularly Indigenous and Black sex workers like Miss Pat, because they were subject to frequent police harassment and profiling.¹⁰⁶

In February 1985 the Fraser Committee submitted its report after receiving more than five hundred briefs from concerned organizations and individuals in the course of its two-year-long \$1.6 million inquiry. The report declared that sex work was a widespread phenomenon in Canada, particularly in urban centres. To supplement the presentations and briefs the federal Department of Justice commissioned sixteen separate research projects on pornography and prostitution.¹⁰⁷ Ultimately, the Committee’s final report advocated for the decriminalization and regulation of sex work. And people interested by the subject were well served by Montreal’s newspapers, as each one allocated plenty of editorial space to legal pundits and sex workers to gauge reactions to the Fraser Report’s recommendations. As all three levels of government scrutinized the content of the Fraser report, activists across the country took to the streets

¹⁰⁴ Anna-Louise Crago and Jenn Clamen, “*Né dans le Redlight: The Sex Workers’ Movement in Montreal*,” in *Selling Sex: Experience, Advocacy, and Research on Sex Work in Canada*, ed. Victoria Love, Elya M. Durisin, and Emily Van der Meulen (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 148-9.

¹⁰⁵ Crago interview with Miss Pat, “Sex Work,” 22.

¹⁰⁶ Brock, *Making Work, Making Trouble*, 8-9.

¹⁰⁷ For the Montreal police’s official statement see Fraser, *Pornography and Prostitution in Canada*, 354-5. Brock, *Making Work, Making Trouble*, 67-70.

advocating for sex workers' rights. In Montreal, supporters of the Vancouver-based Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes held a peaceful demonstration in the Red Light district. Coinciding with the report – and perhaps in a calculated promotional move – Rita Picard released her book. Her memoir, written while she was incarcerated, traces the story of how she managed to become one of the city's most reputable and famous madams. During a promotional interview with *Le Journal de Montréal* a journalist raised the topic du jour and wondered what Picard thought of the Fraser Report. Her response was unambiguous. She scoffed at the idea that Jean Drapeau, police officers, and other conservatives would ever entertain the legalization of prostitution.¹⁰⁸

Finally, on 2 May 1985, Brian Mulroney's Tories tabled Bill C-49. As Brock notes, Bill C-49 shelved the Fraser Committee's recommendations and addressed solely the concerns of police, municipal politicians, and residents' organizations.¹⁰⁹ Among other things, the Bill made it clear that soliciting in a public place for the purpose of prostitution need not be, as the "Hutt" decision had outlined, "pressing and persistent." The Bill replaced the "soliciting" law with the "communicating" law, which maintained public order by making sex work less visible, and therefore less of a nuisance to the general public. Because the Bill gave municipal authorities greater control over street soliciting, Canadian mayors welcomed it. Mayor Drapeau supported it with the "greatest satisfaction" and asked that members of the Canadian Parliament adopt it as soon as possible.¹¹⁰ Meanwhile, the Bill was harshly criticized by sex workers and activists. "Every woman should be outraged by this bill," said Valerie Scott of CORP; "It denies not only prostitutes but also all women free access to their city and freedom of association." Scott recognized the Bill's vague terms as giving police too much power and feared that it would lead

¹⁰⁸ Michel Auger, "Les politiciens n'y changeront rien : les prostituées continueront de 'travailler' comme avant," *Le Journal de Montréal*, 28 April 1985. Picard, *Ma vie dans les bordels*.

¹⁰⁹ Brock, *Making Work, Making Trouble*, 81.

¹¹⁰ *Presentation of the City of Montréal to the Legislative Committee on Bill C-49 submitted by Jean Drapeau*, 29 October 1985, dossier – Prostitution, P100-07-D105, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM.

to “massive arrests on the street.”¹¹¹ In the end, however, Bill C-49 was passed by Parliament on 20 November 1985, and one month later it was enacted into law:

Offence in Relation to Prostitution

195.1(1) Every person who in a public place or in any place open to public view

- (a) stops or attempts to stop any motor vehicle,
- (b) impedes the free flow of pedestrian or vehicular traffic or ingress to or egress from premises adjacent to that place, or
- (c) stops or attempts to stop any person or in any manner communicates or attempts to communicate with any person

For the purpose of engaging in prostitution or of obtaining the sexual services of obtaining the sexual services of a prostitute is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.

(2) In this section, “public place” includes any place to which the public have access as of right or by invitation, express or implied, and any motor vehicle located in a public place or in any place open to public view.

According to one legal scholar, for all intents and purposes, the legislative amendment was a return to the 1972 vagrancy offence, which made sex workers easy “targets.”¹¹²

During the following months responsibility for enforcing the new law in Montreal was divided between the Morality Squad and specialized morality officers who were attached to districts where sex work was common. According to researchers, and in contrast to other Canadian cities, Montreal police issued quotas to keep officers and supervisors motivated; an ongoing enforcement policy was adopted whereby officers had to arrest at least one sex worker and one client a week to keep a balanced ratio.¹¹³ Accordingly, after Bill C-49 was adopted “fighting prostitution [became] a priority if not a major project for anti-vice units, available staff and budget.”¹¹⁴ Thus, in January 1986 the Police Department returned to the Red Light district to cleanup the area in what the chief municipal court prosecutor described as “a long night for the prostitutes.”¹¹⁵ However, in the aftermath between sixty and one hundred people took part in

¹¹¹ Valerie Scott, “C-49: A New Wave of Oppression,” in *Good Girls/Bad Girls*, ed. Laurie Bell (Toronto: The Women’s Press, 1987), 100-1.

¹¹² O’Connell, “The Impact of Bill C-49 on Street Prostitution,” 138-41.

¹¹³ E. Nick Larsen, “The Limits of the Law: A Critical Examination of Prostitution Control in Three Canadian Cities,” *Hybrid: Journal of Law and Social Change*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1996), 36-7. Ouimet, *La criminalité au Québec*, 302, 313. Gemme, *Street Prostitution*, 50-1.

¹¹⁴ Gemme, *Street Prostitution*, 48.

¹¹⁵ Robert Winters, “Morality squad targets prostitutes and clients in red-light sweep,” *Montreal Gazette*, 11 January 1986.

a spontaneous nighttime protest. The protest was a bold resistance to authority, which proved that a new political culture regarding sex workers' rights was underway. Organized by the pan-Canadian Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes (which held protests in other cities the night before), the protest saw supporters gather in the Red Light district to voice their opposition to Drapeau and against the Criminal Code's amendments. Supporters, mainly students and advocates for women's rights, exposed an important political shift in public consciousness by deploring police crackdowns on sex workers.¹¹⁶ The following year the Canadian Action Committee on the Status of Women took a similar position when it demanded that the government repeal the Criminal Code's prostitution legislation.¹¹⁷

Five days before Bill C-49 was enacted into law Drapeau fell in his office and cracked a vertebra. After assessing his failing health and because he knew (after having measured his chances) that it would be difficult to win another election, he took the difficult decision to end his political career after completing his term in office. This decision finalized a power shift to the Montreal Citizens' Movement (MCM) that had been happening for some time. On the 1986 campaign trail long-time Tory organizer Claude Dupras, the Civic Party's mayoral candidate, vowed to continue the reformist fight by administering the Criminal Code's prostitution legislation "as strictly as possible." His opponent, on the other hand, MCM party leader Jean Doré, held a progressive position on sex work. In a reversal from the inflammatory rhetoric that he had used during the 1984 by-election, Doré claimed to favour the decriminalization of prostitution and he told voters that the MCM would enact bylaws to help curb street soliciting without punishing sex workers. The party would achieve this by creating halfway houses for

¹¹⁶ "Manifestation de soutien aux belles de nuit de Montréal," *La Presse*, 18 January 1986. Marian Scott, "March to protest tougher laws on prostitution draws 60 women," *Montreal Gazette*, 18 January 1986.

¹¹⁷ Huguette Roberge, "Haro sur 1 000 'mauvaises femmes' et leurs 500 clients!," *La Presse*, 29 March 1987.

those who wished to quit the business.¹¹⁸ Dupras, striking an alarmist tone, rejected the idea and claimed that, under Doré, the city would transform “into the bordello-ridden, wide-open town [that] it was in the 1940s and early 1950s.”¹¹⁹ Clearly, the Civic Party’s goals would remain the same, with or without its founding leader. In fact, Dupras’s platform looked back to a time that preceded the Civic Party itself – when Drapeau and Des Marais governed under the Civic Action League.

On 9 November 1986, the Civic Party lost its bid for another term to the MCM, and Jean Doré became mayor. Despite new political winds, arrests of sex workers increased at a stunning rate over the following months. In December 1986, for instance, undercover female agents acted in a major crackdown on clients, which led to the arrest of 201 clients in two weeks.¹²⁰ Though most policewomen affirmed feeling uncomfortable posing as sex workers, some revealed that they had become used to this line of work and according to a group of researchers one even took “a mischievous pleasure in arresting clients.” “We observed her in action,” they reported, “and can confirm that even an alert client would be taken unawares [*sic*].”¹²¹ Therefore, far from ending the policing of street-based sex work, Jean Doré and the MCM upheld the crackdown campaign in the Red Light district. Ultimately, this campaign displaced the boundaries of the sex industry farther away from the city’s financial centre and into the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighbourhood.¹²² The sum of this transformation, claimed one supervising officer, completely changed the Red Light district’s and downtown’s image. “It is no longer a prostitution supermarket,” he said.¹²³

¹¹⁸ “Le RCM veut que soit décriminalisée la prostitution,” *La Presse*, 19 December 1985.

¹¹⁹ Irwin Block, “Dupras vow: I’ll rid city of ‘menace’ of prostitution,” *Montreal Gazette*, 9 October 1986.

¹²⁰ Gemme, *Street Prostitution*, 55.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹²² Crago and Clamen, “Né dans le Redlight,” 149-50. Ouimet, *La criminalité au Québec*, 302. Gemme, *Street Prostitution*, 48-9.

¹²³ Gemme, *Street Prostitution*, 185.

By the end of the decade the above-mentioned group of researchers noted that the city only started to grasp how sex workers and police understood the effect that HIV/AIDS had had on the industry. The group hypothesized that by the end of the millennium HIV/AIDS, more so than legal measures, might deter clients, and thus reduce sex work altogether. Or, they further hypothesized, perhaps enforcement of prostitution laws would come to a halt because of widespread fear of the virus within police ranks.¹²⁴

Conclusion

At the tail-end of his political career Jean Drapeau returned to an issue that had long ago convinced Montrealers he was equipped and qualified to govern the city. To eradicate sex work from the city's landscape during the mid-1950s and early-1960s, Drapeau had made modernism, incorruptibility, and morality central components to his rule. Part of that endeavour required the reorganization of the Police Department so that corrupt officials could be uprooted from the department. In the late-1970s and early-1980s, however, the issue did not revolve around the notion of immoral police officers or politicians, but rather around how local police departments could enforce prostitution legislation. Because the legislation was too weak, Montreal authorities claimed, the Civic Party enacted anti-prostitution bylaw 5464 in 1980. This bylaw, however, was declared ultra vires by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1984 after long-fought court battles by civil rights lawyers and sex workers – notably Fernande St-Martin-Poitras, Johanne Meli, Wesley Krehbiel, and Risa Goldwax. This ruling effectively nullified other similar bylaws enacted or proposed in Vancouver, Niagara Falls, Regina, and Halifax.

But as litigation made its way through the courts, the Civic Party remained optimistic about municipal powers and in 1983 it enacted anti-soliciting bylaw 6249. That same year,

¹²⁴ Ibid., 327.

Canada's Justice Minister commissioned an inquiry into pornography and prostitution. The Fraser Committee (1983-1985) was formed to address two remarkably different demands, one involving feminist concerns about the prevalence of degrading images of women and the other to respond to expressions of frustrations by police and municipal officials. The resulting report eventually led to amendments to the Criminal Code dealing with prostitution in December 1985. Thus, instead of attempting to protect sex workers amidst the growing HIV/AIDS pandemic or addressing the factors that encouraged the industry, the federal government passed another coercive instrument of social control that further marginalized sex workers.¹²⁵ By the mid-1980s, policies, bylaws, policing, and amendments to the Criminal Code, had all affected the geography of sex work. Across Canada police departments had been dealing with myriad complaints coming from residents, merchants, and politicians who demanded that they prosecute and displace sex workers. At the centre of this national wrangle was Montreal's extremely proactive Civic Party. Ultimately, according to Jean Drapeau, Bill C-49 was exactly what his city needed from federal legislators.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Sheilagh O'Connell, "The Impact of Bill C-49 on Street Prostitution: 'What's Law Got to Do with It,'" *Journal of Law and Social Policy*, 4 (1988): 143.

¹²⁶ *Summary of the Presentation of Mayor of Montreal His Worship Mr. Jean Drapeau to the Legislative Committee on Bill C-49*, 29 October 1985, p. 2, dossier – Prostitution, P100-07-D105, Fonds Jean Drapeau, AVM.

Conclusion

*We're entering a new era in Montreal.*¹

—Jean Doré, 9 November 1986

The 1986 municipal election brought one political era to an end and swept into power a party of new leaders who had a different agenda and an alternative vision for the city. In total, fifty-five MCM members were elected, including the new mayor, forty-one-year-old Jean Doré. Meanwhile the Civic Party was virtually wiped out, winning only one council seat. The lopsided result gave Montreal newspapers a lot to consider, and each one assessed the significance of the moment. “Yesterday was a day of great mourning,” reported *La Presse*, “[as] we buried the party of Jean Drapeau.”² Striking a different tone, the *Montreal Gazette*, which had endorsed the MCM during the campaign, claimed that it was a “humiliating and inglorious end” for the Civic Party, and that the MCM’s victory signalled “a turning point perhaps without parallel in Quebec since Jean Lesage’s Liberals ushered in the Quiet Revolution.”³ *Le Devoir* – the newspaper that had thrown its weight behind social reformers in the 1950s and created the momentum for Jean Drapeau’s political career – offered a neutral statement: “Montrealers have bet on change, on a new team. It is the duty of those who were elected not to disappoint them.”⁴ Perhaps anticipating a colossal loss for the Civic Party, Jean Drapeau remained at home on the night of the election. Later that evening he phoned the venue where its supporters had gathered and spoke with party leader Claude Dupras. With few words in mind, he simply told his successor “C’est la vie.” In

¹ Ingrid Peritz, “Doré, MCM sweep to power: New mayor controls 55 seats to rivals’ 3,” *Montreal Gazette*, 10 November 1986.

² Gérald Le Blanc, “Au tour du RCM,” *La Presse*, 10 November 1986.

³ Lewis Harris, “Dupras says Civic Party will rise again,” *Montreal Gazette*, 10 November 1986. “Change sweeps in,” *Montreal Gazette*, 10 November 1986.

⁴ Paul-André Comeau, “La fin de l’ère Drapeau,” *Le Devoir*, 10 November 1986.

response, Dupras thanked Drapeau and spoke in a heartfelt way, calling him Montreal's "second creator," the one who brought the city into modern life.⁵

Jean Drapeau had brought grandeur to Montreal, a grandeur that had instilled a sense of civic pride into his middle-class political base. During the second half of the twentieth century, at a moment when the world was increasingly evolving and globalizing, Montreal transformed at a speed that left most North American mayors envious. Indeed, Montreal's mayor would be remembered internationally as the one who turned Montreal from a declining, crime-beleaguered city into a cosmopolitan hub, and it was something that he reiterated when he announced his retirement in June 1986: "My reward is the feeling that I have contributed to cleansing public affairs, to have significantly contributed to transforming the city we already loved into a city we love even more, into a city foreigners have learned to discover on site and even from afar." "Montreal today," he proudly proclaimed, "is open to the world."⁶

When Jean Doré became mayor of Montreal, the former labour lawyer sought to avoid the autocratic style favoured by his charismatic predecessor. Debating the merits of policy or holding discussions over local issues was something that Mayor Drapeau had expressly avoided.⁷ The new municipal administration thus promised to inform Montrealers and listen to them by increasing services, holding question periods at council meetings, and allowing them to challenge controversial projects in their neighbourhoods.⁸ Moreover, the MCM confronted

⁵ André Pépin, "'J'accepte le verdict avec humilité'," *La Presse*, 10 November 1986.

⁶ Michael T. Kaufman, "Jean Drapeau, 83, Mayor Who Reshaped Montreal," *New York Times*, 14 August 1999. Editorial, "The Drapeau Era," *Montreal Gazette*, 28 June 1986.

⁷ "The public is not interested in discussion – only results," he told reporters at the height of his political career. Ian Adams, "The Busy Little Man Who's Building Big Town," *Maclean's*, 3 December 1966. See Michel Barcelo, "Urban Development Policies in Montreal, 1960-1978: An Authoritarian Quiet Revolution," *Quebec Studies* no. 6 (1988): 26-40.

⁸ Ingrid Peritz, "Doré, MCM sweep to power: New mayor controls 55 seats to rivals' 3," *Montreal Gazette*, 10 November 1986. See Robert K. Whelan, "The Politics of Urban Redevelopment in Montreal: Regime Change From Drapeau to Doré," *Quebec Studies* no. 12 (1991): 155-69.

issues that the Civic Party had refused to entertain, like police reform and longstanding practices relating to racial profiling.⁹ The city's first openly gay politician, Saint-Jacques district's Raymond Blain, exemplified another aspect of this new era as he worked with other MCM councillors to improve communication between the city and its queer community.¹⁰ Meanwhile, issues championed by other civic groups, like "La rue, la nuit, femmes sans peur" (Montreal's Take Back the Night), were considered when the MCM looked into improving women's safety in public space.¹¹ Within a year of being elected the new administration sought to better understand how urban space was experienced and attempted to forge a new urban environment by collaborating with citizens. Indeed, it was a new era.

But this honeymoon phase soon fizzled out. Under the MCM police raids and crackdowns continued. Despite a change in tone and rhetoric, which was significant, the MCM's action soon fell far below expectations. Sexual policing and regulations continued to shape the city and structure how residents experienced the nighttime city. Raids of queer night scenes and of erotic performances, although less frequent, showed that the administration and its police department remained committed to moralizing urban space.¹² The reality was that Jean Drapeau and the Civic Party had changed the political culture so much that many policies had become deeply embedded in city institutions and public attitudes. For one thing, the reformers had shifted local policies and expectations concerning sex, labour, and art to such a degree that the

⁹ See Ted Rutland, *Un échec éternel : La lutte contre le profilage racial à Montréal, 1979-présent* (Montreal: Mémoire présenté à la Commission de la Sécurité Publique de la Ville de Montréal, 22 novembre 2019), 17-8.

¹⁰ "Homosexuals helped me win: gay candidate," *Montreal Gazette*, 10 November 1986. Ingrid Peritz, "Doré, MCM sweep to power: New mayor controls 55 seats to rivals' 3," *Montreal Gazette*, 10 November 1986.

¹¹ Femmes et Ville (Women and the City), "For a City With a Good Life for Women as Well," Brief presented during the City of Montreal public hearings on the Policy Statement on the arrondissement Centre Redevelopment Plan (June 1988), 46. P0002, SS1, S1, VM086, AVM.

¹² For example see Christopher Nowlin, "Indecency Law: Microscopic and Macroscopic Views of the Female Breast and Lap-Dancing in the Dark," in *Judging Obscenity: A Critical History of Expert Evidence* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 210-20. Jason B. Crawford and Karen Herland, "Sex Garage: Unspooling Narratives, Rethinking Collectivities," *Journal of Canadian Studies / Revue d'études canadiennes* vol. 48, no. 1 (Winter / hiver 2014): 106-131.

new administration was hesitant to usher in profound change. By the early-1990s a new wave of political opposition would arise to challenge the MCM.

* * *

This dissertation encompasses a range of different people who are not usually brought within the same analytical framework: politicians, sex workers, service industry labourers, performing and visual artists, tourists, queer community members, firefighters, and police officers. For all their differences, they were individuals who in one way or another found themselves deeply affected by the reformist agenda, one that was tied to policing, part of a long tradition of moral regulations, and pursued against a backdrop of heightened suspicions of nonconformity as a threat to public safety. The politics of policing, based on an understanding of the relationship between morality and order, formed the backbone of the municipal administration's project during the second half of the twentieth century. And because order was more fragile when darkness fell, the night became a central focus for reformers. Night redefined how people understood social and sexual norms and it reshaped labour struggles, culture, and sex as Montrealers had understood them during the first half of the twentieth century.

The contest over nighttime public space evolved as property owners, merchants, pedestrians, authorities, police, sex workers, and civil rights activists articulated different concerns regarding gender, sexuality, labour, and art. This dissertation has shown how Montreal's mid- to late-twentieth-century transformation was enabled by a greater control and regulation of night. Over the course of this period municipal leaders and police took steps to regulate and control the night by enacting and enforcing bylaws in nightspots and in public space where women and queer community members of different races mingled. Because night was a time when different rules applied, and when power expanded and contracted, it also

became a time when people could challenge the political order, a terrain where the boundaries of authority were contested ferociously. In the end, there was only one thing upon which all sides agreed: the struggle for the city's future played out at night.



Figure 23: *Two Saint-Jacques ward residents survey the damage caused during the Red Weekend. Plessis Street, 4 November 1974. VM007-Y-1-D37, AVM.*

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