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The once-glamorous city is now a corrupt, crumbling, mob-ridden disgrace. What went wrong?

by [Martin Patriquin](#) on Thursday, October 29, 2009 1:45pm - [282 Comments](#)

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It says something about a city when tales of bravery in the face of organized crime are apparently a prerequisite to governing it. Five weeks into an increasingly bizarre election campaign dominated by scandal, graft and good, old-fashioned backstabbing, Gérald Tremblay wants it known that he is scared for the well-being of his family. Montreal's mayor and leader of the municipal party Union Montréal (Quebec has parties at the city level) is vying for a third term. He says his decision to clean up city hall during the past four years has made him a target of Montreal's criminal underbelly. He recently reminded voters of the time police found two fire bombs behind his country house in 2005. Then there was the time when, as Quebec's industry minister, he denied a liquor permit to a Montreal-area wine producer—who was subsequently found dead in the trunk of his own car. "I'm not naive," Tremblay told *Le Devoir* last week. "I'm very well informed. I knew exactly what I was getting into with the city of Montreal."

Not to be outdone, Tremblay's opponents offered up their own brave bona fides. Tremblay's main challenger and leader of the rival party Vision Montréal, Louise Harel, reminded voters that her late husband, journalist and union leader Michel Bourdon, was repeatedly threatened by the Mafia. Richard Bergeron, of the upstart *Projet Montréal*, says he has requested police protection, though he makes it clear that his crusade against municipal corruption hasn't garnered him any death threats—yet. "Everyone knows where I live," he told a reporter recently.

While other cities grapple with garbage collection, snow removal and other humdrum realities of municipal politics, Montreal has, in the past several weeks, become a chaotic and dirty throwback to its bad old days. Allegations of mobbed-up favouritism, brown envelopes stuffed with cash, wildly inflated city contracts, an aggressive blue-collar union perpetually at odds with the mayor's office: these, not its many charms and joie de vivre, are Montreal's stock in trade these days.

Just who gets to fix this disaster will be decided soon: Montrealers go to the polls on Nov. 1. All three mayoral candidates—including Tremblay, who claims to have seen and heard nothing of the excesses perpetuated on his watch—have promised once again to clean up city hall. Should Tremblay fall, and there is a growing chance that he will, he will be replaced either by an ardent separatist and former Péquiste minister (Harel) who often refuses to speak English, or a relative political neophyte (Bergeron), whose greenish anti-corruption credentials are undermined by his staunch belief that 9/11 was an inside job perpetuated by the U.S. government.

The winner will inherit a chronically underperforming city burdened by an archaic governmental structure, a bloated public sector (Montreal's city council has twice as many elected officials as New York City), and what many say is an endemic culture of corruption. More and more of its citizens are taking refuge in the suburbs, while big business continues to flee for Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary. Montreal is saddled with the largest debt of any major Canadian city, and its infrastructure is a leaking, potholed mess. It costs 30 per cent more to build a stretch of road in Quebec than anywhere else in the country, and a recent multi-million-dollar water contract was cancelled after its cost ballooned from \$154 million to nearly \$356 million. The city's political culture, one of its disgraced former politicians said recently, is hopelessly, institutionally crooked, "infected with gangrene." Meanwhile, the province's language hawks are yet again glancing sideways at the supposed creeping English presence among the city's immigrant populations. The parade of bad news afflicting what a *La Presse* columnist once dubbed "a beautifully messy Latin city" has raised the question: how could something so beautiful go so wrong?

Montreal's political and social landscape didn't look nearly as grim eight years ago, when Gérald Tremblay rode into office with a promise to bring democracy and transparency to Canada's second largest city. A former perfumer, hockey agent and provincial cabinet minister in Robert Bourassa's Liberal government, Tremblay has cultivated the image of a squeaky-clean (if somewhat bland) politician whose idea of excitement, until his knee surgery three years ago, was a nice, long run through his neighbourhood of Outremont.

And Montreal welcomed him, in large part because he was so beige. The city has long been considered Quebec's existential nightmare, "the rottenest city on the continent," according to religious pamphleteer Evanston Hart in 1919, a place where every vice and threat—games of chance, naked flesh, the lion's share of English people in the province—could be experienced in abundance. Though the city has since been rehabilitated somewhat, its reputation for secretive, top-down governance à la Jean Drapeau (who took power in the 1950s and ruled for nearly three decades) remained, all the way to Tremblay's predecessor, Pierre Bourque. In his first two years in office beginning in 1994, Bourque's party pleaded guilty to 122 counts of electoral and campaign finance charges. "Ever since Drapeau, Montreal mayors have had the tendency to last a couple of terms and then get into trouble," says Harold Chorney, a professor of public policy at Concordia University in Montreal.

For years, it seemed Tremblay would buck the trend, thanks to Montrealers' yawning indifference to municipal matters: barely 35 per cent of voters bothered to cast a ballot in the 2005 election. Whiffs of scandal—the city's real estate corporation, run by Tremblay's former chief of staff, was found to have made a sweetheart land deal to a well-connected developer—bounced off the mayor, as did the news that the city's consultant and outsourcing budget had nearly doubled over six years.

Tremblay managed to withstand the revelation last April that Frank Zampino, his former right-hand man on the city's powerful executive committee, had twice vacationed on the yacht of Tony Accurso, whose firm was ultimately awarded a \$356-million water-meter contract without any debate in city council. "Frank Zampino didn't make the best decision," the mayor said of his lieutenant's choice of vacation. The mayor nonetheless defended the water-meter contract, only to cancel it when an auditor general's report said it was rife with "irregularities [and] deficient management."

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Still, a poll conducted in the heat of that scandal gave Tremblay a five-point edge over his closest rival, Benoit Labonté, a former member of Tremblay's party whose electoral campaign included promising to bring a major-league soccer team and the world's fair to Montreal, as well as a pledge to make city hall more transparent. "Tremblay ahead, despite it all," read an incredulous *La Presse* headline in May. The reason? "People find him to be a congenial, pleasant and decent man who is surrounded by people who are maybe less than that," Chorney says. "Tremblay was heroic in the federalist media. Everything in Quebec revolves around how this does or doesn't make a contribution to the issue of sovereignty. There was a feeling among Anglos that Tremblay, a federalist, might be a son of a bitch, but he's our son of a bitch, so they turn a blind eye to certain excesses." Judging by the election results, which saw Tremblay beat rival Pierre Bourque by 16 percentage points, French voters largely followed suit.

The first truly devastating bombshell came earlier this month, shaking Montrealers of their indifference: a Radio-Canada investigation into the province's construction sector uncovered a wide-ranging price-fixing scheme in which 14 construction companies colluded to fix bids on public construction jobs, and in some cases used Hells Angels muscle to intimidate rival firms. One of these contracts included the refinishing of the facade of Montreal's city hall, though most were for road construction and repair in and around Montreal.

These firms, the investigation alleged, would typically pay three per cent of the value of the public works contracts to what one former Transport Quebec official dubbed "the Montreal Italian Mafia." Coincidentally or not, an ensuing *La Presse* investigation found that a former Union Montreal fundraising official named Bernard Trépanier was in charge of a scheme that saw three per cent of the value of contracts distributed to political parties, councillors and city bureaucrats. (Mr. Trépanier, dubbed "Mr. Three Per Cent" by *La Presse*, denied involvement in the scheme.)

Furthermore, *La Presse* noted, 16 of the 272 firms who worked for the City of Montreal since 2005 received nearly half the city contracts. The overwhelming majority of them went to . . . Tony Accurso, the yacht-owning friend of Zampino, and a politically connected businessman who has extensive construction interests in both Quebec and Ontario. Accurso also had business ties to Claude Blanchet, husband of Parti Québécois Leader Pauline Marois. In 2007, Accurso allegedly picked up the \$14,000 tab for an Action Démocratique du Québec fundraising dinner held at Accurso's restaurant. Zampino himself left city politics to work for Dessau, which was part of the consortium* with an Accurso-owned company that was awarded Montreal's water meter contract, in January 2009 (though he left the position three months later).

"Tremblay is either crooked, incompetent or just lacks the courage to attack difficult problems," says John Gomery, he of the Gomery commission on the sponsorship scandal, who now serves as honorary chairman of Bergeron's Projet Montréal.

But Tremblay's party certainly hasn't had a monopoly on scandal. Louise Harel promised to clean up city hall "with a broom"—*en français, bien sûr*, given her triumphant inability to speak English. She chose as her running mate Benoît Labonté, who kindly stepped aside as leader of her party, with a promise from Harel that he would become president of the city's powerful executive committee if she was elected. Armed with near-instant favourable polls, Harel depicted Tremblay as dithering, clueless and willingly blind to the corruption going on under his nose. She called Labonté, a borough mayor, formerly with Tremblay's Union Montréal banner, "a man of principle" who left Tremblay's side because he couldn't stand the stench.

The Harel-Labonté juggernaut (such as it was) lasted four months—until a journalist for the online newspaper *Rue Frontenac* found that Labonté himself had met with and solicited money from none other than Tony Accurso on several occasions in 2008. Labonté peppered his subsequent, vehement denials with threats of lawsuits against *Frontenac*. By way of her Twitter feed, Harel denounced the "false accusations." Her indignation lasted all of 24 hours, however; the next day, Labonté was fired.

Labonté soon found himself in a nondescript hotel room in front of Radio-Canada's cameras, wearing what might be described as post-catastrophe casual, admitting to everything he'd denied over the last week. Yes, he'd lied. Yes, he'd met with Accurso several times. Yes, people close to him accepted cash from Accurso on his behalf. Moreover, Labonté said, there is corruption of this sort at every level of government—even in Harel's Union Montréal party, where "sectoral finance" was code for soliciting campaign donations from big business, illegal under Quebec law. "The reality is that every party, municipal as well as provincial, and there are no exceptions, collects cash and gives it to front men, who then write a cheque to the party in question," Labonté said.

Put off but undeterred, Harel stashed away her broom. She would need nothing short of a vacuum to clean up this mess, she said.

That's an understatement. Even beyond all the corruption, Montreal has become unruly and dysfunctional. It's perhaps easy to see why it's so difficult to get things done when you consider the city has four levels of municipal government and 105 elected representatives—by comparison, Toronto has 45; New York City, 51. It's also saddled with one of the largest public sectors of any North American city. Tremblay put this system in place to keep several recently (and forcibly) merged boroughs from separating. It didn't even succeed in that aim; in 2005, 15 mostly English boroughs voted to leave the amalgamated city. Result: these boroughs pay taxes to the city of Montreal, yet their citizens cannot vote in the municipal election. It also means these boroughs have become de facto fiefdoms that regularly stymie island-wide projects like expanded rail service and highway access. The city's governing structure is "a Swiss-cheese mess," says Concordia's Chorney.

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Maybe it's why so many people and so many businesses continue to leave. According to a recent Quebec government report, 21,000 Montrealers decamped for off-island suburbs between 2007 and 2008—a bigger exile, percentage-wise, than from Quebec's desolate, perpetually destitute North Shore, and the sixth year in a row that the city lost more than 20,000 people. Head offices, too: Montreal, according to a recent Fraser Institute report, continues to lose them to other parts of the country—even though the threat of separatism, Montreal's eternal albatross, has been practically non-existent for some time. People who remain, according to statistics, are less likely to finish school (the city has a 45 per cent dropout rate), more likely to be unemployed, less likely to get a physician, and more likely to become pregnant at a younger age than anywhere else in the province. And the usual tussles over multiculturalism continue. Former Péquiste premier Bernard Landry, decrying the fact that immigrants and anglophone students now outnumber their old-stock French counterparts in Montreal-area schools, recently called for the provincial government to modify Bill 101 so as to restrict access to English colleges, known as CEGEPs, for recent immigrants. Old ghosts, it seems, die hard.

The man who wants desperately to hang on to all of this is still standing—shaking in his boots, maybe, but standing nonetheless. At one moment, Mayor Tremblay denies knowing anything about payoffs, price fixing or mob connections within city hall; the next, he says he is scared for the well-being of his loved ones because he has stood up to these very influences in the past. He has even brought his non-denial-denial shtick to the airwaves. “One of your colleagues at work decides to do something a little shady,” Tremblay says in one radio advert. “Do you think they're going to tell their boss or you? Face it: they're not going to tell anybody.”

His dithering might be serving him well for now. The *Gazette*, whose journalists broke several key stories about spending irregularities within Tremblay's government over the years, endorsed the outgoing mayor regardless. “[T]he least distressing candidate in an unprepossessing field,” read an editorial earlier this week. Tremblay also has boots on the ground: come election day, Union Montréal has the (unofficial) use of the Quebec Liberal party's formidable vote-getting machine, the very same one that has helped deliver three successful elections for Premier Jean Charest. Internal Union Montréal polls suggest Tremblay will likely squeak back into office, albeit by a greatly reduced margin. “They're taking advantage of the fact that [Montrealers] have been asleep,” says former Montreal police chief and one-time mayoral candidate, Jacques Duchesneau.

There is one Montreal party with ethics on its side. Indeed, this election campaign has turned into something of a perfect storm for Projet Montréal, whose plainly simple environmental policy—less cars, more public transport and green space—is nearly as righteous as its financing rules, which are stricter than those set out in Quebec law.

The party is particularly popular in the Plateau, the artist- and hipster-infused bohemia where its leader Richard Bergeron has held a seat since 2005. “We have a monopoly of virtue,” Gomery says—largely because of Gomery

himself, who joined the party in August, when its support was in the single digits. Things have changed: according to the most recent polls, Projet Montréal is nearly tied for second place with Harel's Vision.

And it would likely be more popular were it not for Bergeron, the man who founded it. Simply put, he believes in the mother of all conspiracies. "Regarding the two other planes that crashed, one at the Pentagon in Washington and the other in a field near Pittsburgh, Pa, we enter into what I refer to as a macabre farce," he wrote in *Les Québécois au volant*, published in 2005. "It might be that what we witnessed on Sept. 11, 2001, was a simple act of state banditry of titanic proportions." It's a telling, sad indication of the state of things in Montreal: the only mayoral candidate untouched by scandal believes 9/11 was an inside job. At the very least, Bergeron shouldn't expect a congratulatory call from the mayor of New York should he win.

Scandals eventually fade, and any city, given the proper leadership, can tackle corruption. Gérald Tremblay is right to be scared—for his political future, for his family, but especially for the future of the city. The old, dysfunctional scandal-ridden Montreal of yore was a fun myth. The newer version is just sad. *With Philippe Gohier*

**Dessau was mistakenly identified as an Accurso-owned company in the print edition of this story.*

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D-R · 4 years ago

I can't believe they're putting the city on the cover in this manner. Annual attacks on Toronto are fine, but questioning the divinity of the Holy City of Montreal? Nobody at

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D-R • 4 years ago

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^ | ▾ Reply Share ›



HarveyMushman → D-R • 4 years ago

Your post invokes an interesting question...is the issue really that Montreal has become a corrupt, mob-ridden city...or is it that the "main stream media" just willing to widely report it now?

Certainly as a businessman who has seen "funny business" in how Montreal...in fact most of Quebec...selects and rejects bid winners...I suspect that corruption and Quebec go together like priests and choir boys. Both "dirty little secrets" that have (finally) "gone public."

^ | ▾ Reply Share ›



JacobPandora → D-R • 4 years ago

Montreal is hardly a city holy
Unless you refer to the pot holey

Pure, Montreal ain't
Less you count up all the saint
Then she is---holy-moly!

1 ^ | v Reply Share >



LEADER OF FLQ → D-R • 3 years ago

Lets all go get a beer and forget this,, GOD SAVE THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND ha ha ha hahahahahhahahah

^ | v Reply Share >



Mariocoldshot → LEADER OF FLQ • a year ago

Ha ha ha ha ,, so funny LOL

^ | v Reply Share >



musictime → D-R • 3 years ago

Holy city >>>> the money is being drained through a holy money grab. Maclain's is right. Right to have the courage to expose the truth >>> and if the truth hurts >>> well then it is time for the City to clean up it's short comings.

Torono is not a perfect place for sure. It has 2 police forces, One that hides behind lamp posts with radar guns ON the Lakeshore among other places and the other police force hand out parking tickets 24 hours a day. However, there is very little if any corruption.

^ | v Reply Share >



frenchie101 • 4 years ago

Too many social programs and not enough money. Streets and bridges can crumble, but if you want years off with the baby, two if you have twins, we will pay you. This is not new - their money management stinks

^ | v Reply Share >



ron • 4 years ago

Folks, we are talking about Montreal - the corruption is nothing new nor is it surprising. What is surprising is that it took this long for anyone to question it. The city has been in decline for decades; what reasonable, honest business would like to move into a city that may or may not be part of Canada in the future - into that vacuum moved the less than reasonable and less than honest business men. The history of corrupt unions, organized crime and less than stellar public officials in Quebec goes back a long way - remember, a young man named Mulroney made his name on a Royal Commission investigating similar corruption in the construction industry in 1974. And, let's not forget the whole AdScam testimony that, at times, came straight out of a Soprano's script. Maybe this time, something will be done -- commence the breath holding.

1 ^ | v Reply Share >



PolJunkie2 → ron • 4 years ago

 Oh great. Here comes the Quebec bashing crew...

^ | v Reply Share ›



frenchie101 → PolJunkie2 · 4 years ago

If we have an opinion, why is it automatically bashing- It's an opinion, like it or not.

^ | v Reply Share ›



PolJunkie2 → frenchie101 · 4 years ago

Who's "we?" The bashers? My post is in response to ron's comment. Why would you feel targetted, I wonder?

^ | v Reply Share ›



Ceeger → PolJunkie2 · 4 years ago

If your reply was to ron's comment, why did you not use the singular reference? If what you say is true, your reply should have said 'Here comes the Quebec basher'. Instead you used the plural, 'here comes the Quebec bashing crew...'

Your own grammar betrays you and methinks we smell the strong scent of BS hovering around your straw-man, red-herring response to frenchie 101. No PolJunkie, you meant exactly what you said, 'Here comes the Quebec bashers'. So now that your own sentence construction has betrayed your real intent, and the straw-man that you set up has now been threshed, when are you going to get around to answering frenchie's question: "If we have an opinion, why is it automatically bashing - it's an opinion, like it or not."

^ | v Reply Share ›



PolJunkie2 → Ceeger · 4 years ago

I have to, once again, ask the question: Since my comment was directed at bashers, ron being one of them, why would frenchie and now yourself think that I was referring to you?

If you don't consider yourself to be a basher, don't use the pronoun "we" in response to my comment, oh grammar checker. And yes, THAT grammar checker w/o an "s" comment is about you, Ceeger.

^ | v Reply Share ›



s_c_f → PolJunkie2 · 4 years ago

Lame. You still haven't answered the question.

^ | v Reply Share ›



Mario Trottier → PolJunkie2 · 3 years ago

Eille Tabarnak , MOe J viens du Quebec pi Ron a raison .

C fait longtemps que ste gand de crosseurs la on le controle icitte.

Tu peut pas avoire plus Qubecois que moe ok
fac vien pas blamer les anglais encore une fois.

Ya pas juste tout le monde en parle, le Journal de Montreal pi TVA qui on le droit de dire se qui pense dans la tribu ok.

Sincreme

Mario Trottier
MTL 514 690-4868
Los Ang 213 261-6543
^ | v Reply Share >



Fred - Brandon MB → ron · 4 years ago

As a native Montrealer, you are right on! The mob and corruption have long been entrenched in Montreal. Remember the construction scandals surrounding the 1976 Olympics?

1 ^ | v Reply Share >



PFDNews → Fred - Brandon MB · 4 years ago

Corruption in Montreal is not new news, though I agree it is nice to see it get some attention in the mainstream press. As for money management and crumbling infrastructure, I don't think anyone in TO should be throwing stones.

I do take issue with the cover suggesting Montreal is no longer Canada's most glamorous city! Our roads may be crumbling and City Hall operates like something out of a Batman comic, but it is still the most "glamorous" city in Canada.

1 ^ | v Reply Share >



Mariocoldshot → ron · a year ago

Mulroney built Petro Canada with payers money and then sold it to his buddies at Suncor

Energy in Calgary.

That phony bastard even took
\$225,000 cash money from Karlheinz Schreiber for the Airbus contract.

He probably has a beautiful oceanside villa somewhere with scammer partners as neighbors.

^ | v Reply Share >



PolJunkie2 • 4 years ago

Martin, aren't we exaggerating just a tad, here?

1 ^ | 1 v Reply Share >



Craig O → PolJunkie2 • 4 years ago

This does smack a bit of fear-mongering sensationalism for the purposes of increasing sales...

1 ^ | v Reply Share >



Sick of the BS → PolJunkie2 • 4 years ago

As someone who lives in Montreal, THIS IS NO EXAGGERATION!!! I am fed up and I am leaving! I have lived in several other Canadian cities and Montreal is supposed to be one of our top cities? How can that be? Has anyone noticed how crumbling and decrepit our roads and buildings are here? There is constant construction and road work going on here and the city always looks like a mess! I know this construction scandal is true, I won't comment on how! I am not moving to Winnipeg, but even Winnipeg is a better city than Montreal. I am out!

3 ^ | v Reply Share >



Peter → Sick of the BS • 4 years ago

Bye Bye! Don't come back! I hear the roads are real nice in Calgary, go check it out!

^ | 1 v Reply Share >



Tagg → Peter • 4 years ago

The only problem with the roads in Calgary are the Quebequois. phuque yieux!! LOL

3 ^ | v Reply Share >



lau laur → Tagg • 4 years ago

lol sick of the bs sed al that stuff up there and all u guys r talking bout is the first sentence the person sed wich wuz "im leaving!"lol...i luv blogs i love ppl comments they can be alil funny..im also a 7th grade girl =)

^ | 1 v Reply Share >



dickwad → Peter • 3 years ago

The good 'ol Kweebec sour grapes refrain!!

2 ^ | v Reply Share >



joseph mcdonald → Peter • a year ago

You should go too

1 ^ | v Reply Share >

1 ^ | v Reply Share >



made_you_look → PolJunkie2 • 4 years ago

PJ, he's not exaggerating.

3 ^ | v Reply Share >



Tagg from Calgary → PolJunkie2 • 4 years ago

Exagerating??? All you have to do is look at the postal code. It's Quebec!!!

In fact if you want to trace the fall of Canada as an internationally respected nation to the third world festering sink hole we are today just trace back to when Quebec hijacked Ottawa under Trudeau, Chretien and Martin. And then we pay the 8 Billion a year in transfer "Mob" money.

This story hasn't even scratched the surface.

3 ^ | v Reply Share >



Mr Ed → PolJunkie2 • 4 years ago

...and now we have 'brickgate'. And did you see those hockey jersey's ... baberpole? They looked more like prison wear than sports wear. LOL in spades!!!!

I love it.

Cheers

^ | v Reply Share >



Gab • 4 years ago

and toronto is so much better? PLEASE. its the same over there. Nobody has the cojones to write about it or talk about it. infact, its probably worse, in the big T.O. since there is way more money to spread around over there.

^ | v Reply Share >



HarveyMushman → Gab • 4 years ago

"and toronto is so much better?"

Based on my personal experience with contract bidding processes for both jurisdictions...yep.

^ | v Reply Share >



YYZ → Gab • 4 years ago

It's easier to make money in Toronto legitimately. Or at least legally.

I don't think David Miller ever feared that he would be a mafia target.

Toronto has loads of problems and likely has corruption - but our biggest problem in government is one of competence, not one of corruption.

^ | v Reply Share >



s_c_f → Gab · 4 years ago

I disagree. Montreal is worse. Politicians in Toronto are not getting threats of violence.

^ | v Reply Share >



Sick of the BS → Gab · 4 years ago

Have you ever noticed how much better the roads are as soon as you drive on to the Ontario side of the Ontario/Quebec border? Seriously T.O. is not squeaky clean but what goes on in Montreal is unbelievable.

^ | v Reply Share >



Fred - Brandon MB · 4 years ago

My family left Montreal in 1972 part of the crest of a wave of Anglos fleeing the persecution of the PQ, after years of harassment by the Union Nationale and the Liberals. Along with us went many of the head offices of prominent Canadian corporations.

Montreal's loss was gain to Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary & Vancouver. The vacuum created by this exodus of talent & money was filled in by the corrupt, mobsters & bikers.

So, if you must blame someone, blame the separatists.

3 ^ | v Reply Share >



YYZ → Fred - Brandon MB · 4 years ago

Indeed. From my office window I can see the headquarters of Bank of Montreal, Royal Bank and Sun Life - all huge contributors to Toronto's economy.

THANK YOU, RENE LEVESQUE!

^ | v Reply Share >



Oemissions → YYZ · 4 years ago

support your big fat corporations by all means but keep them out of Quebec. We still have people and culture here!

^ | v Reply Share >



Pat → Fred - Brandon MB · 4 years ago

Fred - need I remind you that this wester wind also carried headquarters from other eastern cities, including Toronto? That this may have been synchronous with the PQ gaining power - in 1976 and not 1972 - but that, while it was a contributing factor it was not the main reason?

As for the word "persecution"... If you objectively compare the rights and resources available to the Anglophone population in Quebec compared to that of Franco population elsewhere in Canada.. Well, I find that word a bit strong. I have always been t loss to understand folks who have lived in the province all their lives and can't speak the

language. Or have unrealistic expectations - If I am in Calgary I speak English, in Quebec City I speak French, and in Madrid Spanish. It's called respect.

We all have our opinions - I love Saskatoon, Halifax, dislike Toronto, for many reasons. But that does not reflect on my appreciation of the inhabitants, their history and culture.

As for corruption - where there is money to be made there will be the mob. Are you so sure that YOUR administration isn't as corrupt - or are they just more careful at hiding it? Wait a few years and we'll talk again.

Meanwhile Montreal will have cleaned up its act and taken measures to prevent it happening again. Hopefully...

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Fred - Brandon MB → Pat • 4 years ago

I'm fully aware that the PQ didn't gain power until 1976, but by 1972 the writing was on the wall. Many of us didn't want to stick around for the implementation of draconian language laws, tat we knew were to come.

You can't believe what a relief it was to leave behind all of the franco/anglo tension of that time. The freedom was like being sprung from prison.

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s_c_f → Pat • 4 years ago

compare the rights and resources available to the Anglophone population in Quebec compared to that of Franco population elsewhere in Canada

Go ahead, make the comparison. Are french signs legal in Ontario? Are you allowed to speak French at work, or is it illegal?

^ | v Reply Share ›



s_c_f → Pat • 4 years ago

compare the rights and resources available to the Anglophone population in Quebec compared to that of Franco population elsewhere in Canada

OK, let's make the comparison. In Ontario:

-can you be fined for putting up a french sign?

-can you be fined for speaking french at work?

-can you be fined for addressing a customer in french, even if you know the customer is a french speaker?

2 ^ | v Reply Share ›



Pure Laine → s_c_f • 4 years ago



OK, let's continue with the comparison. In Québec:

- you will be fine for putting an English sign in Québec only after having ignored a request for adding French on it.
- you won't be fined for speaking English at work.
- you won't be fined for addressing a customer in English, especially when the customer is an English speaker.

^ | v Reply Share ›



s_c_f → Pure Laine • 4 years ago

Hmmm...

- so you are admitting that in Quebec it is illegal to put up an English sign, in the rest of North America you can put up any darn sign you like (that's what they call freedom). Wow, this one was easy. Therefore the french minority in the rest of Canada is treated better in this regard.

- yes, you can be fined for speaking English at work, it has happened before and it will happen again

<http://blakes.com/english/view.asp?ID=3208> "The fundamental right of employees to carry on their activities in French would cover oral communications between an employer (through its representatives) and its employees that are work-related"

- yes, the law in Quebec states that when addressing customers, you MUST start in French, and only afterwards can you switch to English. Many businesses have been fined for this.

^ | v Reply Share ›



Pure Laine → s_c_f • 4 years ago

Well, there's nothing to admit really. It's the law, French is mandatory on signs. As for English at work, there are plenty of organizations where an employee must know English to get around, Canadair (Bombardier), CN, Air Canada...

As for addressing customers in English first and getting fine for it, I'd like to see evidence of this. It's ridiculous, really. I've been approached in English in Montreal businesses many times and always calmly reply in French. When the salesperson has linguistic limitations, I'm always glad to help out. The important thing is that all is done with courtesy.

The Charter of the French language is a protectionist legislation; there's no sense denying it and that's how it should be looked at. Canadian Content Regulations are also a protectionist legislation; it makes it illegal to put non

regulations are also a protectionist legislation, it makes it illegal to put non Canadian music above a certain percentage of airplay. There's nothing wrong with wanting to ensure the perpetuation of a valid culture confronted with the overwhelming domination of another. Now, the beauty of Québec's law is that it doesn't prevent English to be used, it simply makes French mandatory. Languages are cumulative.

^ | v Reply Share ›



YUL → Fred - Brandon MB • 4 years ago

Give me a break! it's that kind of antiquated thinking that fuels the separatists' fires. I completely agree that Montreal has major issues regarding corruption but to blame the separatists? I'm one of the Anglos who stayed...and Montreal is all the richer for having lost blathering idiots like you. Hope you're enjoying the finer things in life that Winnipeg has to offer like Tim Horton's, and.....hmmmm sorry can't think of anything else. Sorry, Winnipeg!

1 ^ | v Reply Share ›



keith c → YUL • 4 years ago

YUL - the point here is not that Winnipeg is less fun and less interesting than Montreal; that's self-evident. the point is that you like too many Montrealers seem to think Montreal being fun means the corruption isn't a big deal. I agree in one sense that blaming "the separatists" is silly; they're not some tiny little clique, they're representative of 60% of the mass of the white Francophone population. Regardless, the proportion of crooks in Montreal increased drastically when the WASPs and Jews, the most economically productive people, started leaving en masse. Ironically, the same vacuum problem exists in the Winnipeg you mock too, which exports most of its best people to Calgary and Vancouver, leaving a disproportionate amount of the wretched and a bad biker-gang problem

^ | v Reply Share ›



s_c_f → YUL • 4 years ago

All the richer for losing all those head offices?

^ | v Reply Share ›



Fred - Brandon MB → YUL • 4 years ago

When you can't make a sensible argument you resort to name-calling. I can assure you that I am not a blathering idiot, and neither is any of my family or friends who also left. (OK, maybe my little brother). You're assessment of Winnipeg simply displays the same ignorance of many who've never been there. Many Winnipeggers leave for other parts of the country, and the world, and many return. No one I have met or known has moved back to Montreal after moving away. Not that there isn't much about Montreal that I love, and I never wanted to leave. I've been back to visit, but life is just too simple and peaceful here to ever move back to such a nasty, corrupt place.

1 ^ | v Reply Share ›



Miki → Fred - Brandon MB • 4 years ago

Pleased to meet you: I am a Montrealer who left and returned. Warts [i.e. separatistes] and all, I cannot think of any other city in Canada in which I would rather live. That is not to say it is best, but it is home. Certainly we can all look at our respective cities' advantages and shortcomings without labelling, name-calling and one-upping?

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Fred - Brandon MB → Miki • 4 years ago

Ok, that 's one.

^ | v Reply Share ›

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