

PRESS RELEASE

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Montreal becomes a ghost town with its main arteries abandoned by merchants due to the city's excessive taxation

On September 23rd, 2020, a meeting was held between the representatives of the Association des Propriétaires de Bâtiments commerciaux du Québec («APBCQ»), including its President, Mr. Peter Sergakis, and the chairman of the executive committee of the city of Montreal, Mr. Benoît Dorais, who was accompanied by Mr. Dimitrios Zoubris, advisor to the Mayor of the city of Montreal, Mrs. Valérie Plante, concerning the excessive commercial taxes imposed by the Metropolis.

During this meeting, the APBCQ emphasized on the non-negotiable demands of its members which, if the elected municipal politicians do not want to be held responsible for the fatal blow to Montreal merchants, they should integrate them as a whole within the next budget of 2021, which needless to say, will be revealed shortly.

The demands addressed by the APBCQ are the following:

- Total tax abatement for the duration of the first confinement, namely until June 30th, 2020;
- Tax relief of 50% of the non-residential tax starting July 1st, 2020, including the second confinement (if any) or until December 31st, 2020;
- Increase the threshold of the property value on the imposition of the differentiated rates up to \$2,000,000 (the actual threshold is of \$625,000);
- Lower the rate of taxation for this first portion (of \$2,000,000) of, at least, 25%;
- In the event that the assessed value of the immoveables increases in the next budget, the taxation rate shall be decreased in an inverse proportion, as to not impose an additional fiscal burden to taxpayers;
- Important decrease of the expenses paid in cash for new infrastructures;
- The whole surplus of the budget (items not spent) shall be applied, dollar for dollar, to reduce commercial taxation;
- Impose on the provincial government of Quebec to increase its transfers and subsidies to the city of Montreal, due to its status as the metropolis of the province of Quebec;
- Reduce workforce within the municipal administration, such as all non-essential workers;
- Optimize the overall operations and activities in order to ensure services to the population at the lowest cost possible;

Mr. Peter Sergakis put the emphasis on the above-mentioned measures in order to halt the commercial death of the Metropolis. The fact remains that the main streets of the city of Montreal are becoming empty at a fulgurating speed, the merchants are closing one after the other: This is catastrophic!!

The small and medium-size merchants, being unable to withstand the fiscal burden imposed by the excessive commercial taxes, opt to relocate their businesses in the suburbs, leaving the city of Montreal, which was once prosperous into an empty ghost town.

As if the aforementioned facts were not enough, the pandemic related to the Covid-19 intensified the financial difficulties to which the merchants are now facing, making the APBCQ's requests even more urgent.

Finally, the APBCQ made clear its member's position: The Plante administration must make profound changes within the city of Montreal and take seriously the demands of the APBCQ, failing which, the APBCQ and its members intend to take all means necessary to defend their demands, and this until to the next municipal election scheduled in 2021.