

**Memorandum on behalf of 14 property owners living at Ground Zero
re the proposed bylaw governing expansion of Percival Molson Stadium**

presented to l'Office de consultation publique de Montréal

9 June 2006

introduction

My name is David Ward. I am president of the association of 14 co-owners of the condominium property at 3608-3624 Aylmer Street, in the borough of Plateau Mont-Royal.

Constructed in 1902, our building, together with the adjacent one at 3626 Aylmer, was designed by the important Quebec architect Alexander Francis Dunlop. Dunlop's best known projects include the Atholstan House (SW corner of Sherbrooke Street and McGill College), the Queens Hotel (on Peel Street, now demolished), and St James Methodist Church (on Ste-Catherine Street, now St James United Church.)

Our three-floor brick and stone structure was renovated and converted into condominiums 20 years ago. It most definitely is not a "student building." Our owner-residents, more than two-thirds of whom choose to not own motor vehicles, are a diverse group of professional adults who prefer to live downtown. My two school-age children have lived here since birth.

interest in the project

We are concerned about the cascading effects on our quality of life and property values if significantly greater masses of people should begin flooding through our neighborhood on their way to and from a) bigger and b) more events at Percival Molson Stadium.

opinions and concerns

1. Our homes are located on the west side of the street, two short blocks below the southern entrance of Percival Molson Stadium. After every large public event at Molson Stadium, whether an Alouettes game or otherwise, we endure sustained periods of loud, gratuitous noise created by many thousands of singing, shouting, noisemaker-blowing spectators surging southwards along our narrow street toward cars and public transportation. Frequently this occurs rather late at night. The southern brick wall of our building is one of several favorite places for men to urinate en route, and they do so in profusion. When the crowds finally do clear out, our sidewalks and pavement are always littered with broken glass bottles, which never should have been allowed into the stadium in the first place. Often we discover that parked cars have been vandalized. A favorite stunt is to walk along and smash every car's rearview mirror. Another is to run and jump along the tops of a whole row of parked vehicles, causing thousands of dollars of damage in a matter of seconds. Street signs and traffic signs often have been bent and twisted by passersby. Stadium-related vandalism to our building has included several broken thermopane windows, two 15-pane French doors smashed beyond repair, graffiti, and overturned flowerpots and windowboxes.
2. Of course most Montrealers are decent, respectful people and it is just a small minority of individuals who ruin it for everyone else. But the formula is simple: more foot traffic through our neighborhood (especially when alcohol and heightened emotions are factors) equals more antisocial behavior and therefore more negative impact on us, the residents.
3. There is some consolation in knowing that the Alouettes organization is responsive to community concerns. When our building suffered several thousand dollars' worth of vandalism following the Montreal-Saskatchewan CFL game on 6 August 2004, we complained to McGill University, our borough government, and the Montreal Alouettes. Impressively, a senior Alouettes executive organized community meetings, listened to us, and eventually pressured two neighborhood police stations to agree to provide a more visible police presence in the neighborhood before, during and after Alouettes games. The Alouettes added a "respect our neighbors" recorded

message which now is played at the conclusion of every game. (Of late we have seen some improvement, presumably because of these interventions. But it is still far from ideal; the problems of noise, litter, vandalism and freestyle urination persist.) I periodically receive a phone call from the Alouettes, asking how it's going and whether we have any suggestions for other ways they could help. In contrast, neither the university nor our elected leaders even acknowledged receipt of our letter, which had been submitted in both official languages along with a petition signed by many of our neighbors.

4. The engineering studies predicting reduced levels of noise and light pollution emanating from an expanded football stadium proper are convincing. However, the contention that fewer spectators would walk up and down Aylmer Street as a consequence of the proposed stadium expansion is considerably less plausible. Molson Stadium is closer to McGill metro than it is to Place-des-Arts metro. And one of the few things we can all agree on is that people enjoy walking along Aylmer Street (especially as opposed to University Street or Park Avenue.)
5. As concerned as we are about the prospect of an additional 100,000 disinhibited Alouettes fans walking through our neighborhood every summer (5,000 X 10 games X in X out), the Great Unknown beyond Alouettes football is what alarms us most. It seems obvious that McGill University would intend to market its newly-renovated stadium to other sports organizations, presenters of music festivals, and other large cultural events. From a purely business point of view, to not utilize a newly-upgraded facility more intensively would be crazy. But if and when they do, the character of our historic residential neighborhood could change irrevocably (for the worse, from our perspective) in a single season.
6. And when shall we expect to be "consulted" about Percival Molson Stadium expansion plans, Phase III?
7. Through it all, the consistently evasive and sometimes flippant or just plain dumb public statements by senior McGill spokespeople do not reassure us in the least. (e.g. "The stadium is closed five months of the year.") We are unimpressed by the university's tactic of using the smooth-talking Alouettes

senior management (who are, after all, the university's very-part-time tenant) as primary advocates and public relations lightning rods for what is clearly a McGill project. This proposed capital improvement project (to be undertaken almost entirely at taxpayer expense!?) would fundamentally transform the character and mission of a major university-owned facility, spinning off enormous benefits to McGill and enormous negative consequences for downtown homeowners. Montreal Alouettes' bottom line and the impact on our community of their business activities are by no means the only or even the largest issues at stake here. All the narrowly-focused fuss about CFL football is McGill University's clever Trojan horse.

suggestions

1. We are left with the impression that the proposed project's impact on 68 trees has received more careful, expert study than its impact on thousands of people living in adjacent residential neighborhoods. We urge that no further approvals be granted by the City of Montreal until a professional and independent **social impact study** can be undertaken in the Milton Park and Jeanne Mance neighborhoods, with the findings to be made part of the public consultation process.
2. If some variation of the proposed project at Percival Molson Stadium is to proceed, it should be accompanied by **strict, enforceable limits on all new non-university uses of that stadium** and **a permanent ban on any further expansion of the facility**. The improbability that the city could impose such controls and/or that McGill would be willing to make such guarantees underscores the intrinsic danger of this entire venture.

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