



Association des Citoyens de Beaconsfield
Beaconsfield Citizens Association

Beaconsfield, February 28, 2022

By email

Mrs Andrée Laforest,
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing of Quebec,
10, rue Pierre-Olivier-Chauveau
Quebec (Quebec)
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Subject: Agglomeration of Montreal – Overtaxation of suburban towns without the right to speak or extra service = Unduly taxing citizens who are not its electors (???)

Dear Minister Laforest,

The purpose of this letter is to draw your attention to a serious tax injustice that has been going on for years and that the City / Agglomeration of Montreal is repeating in 2022 with regard to the annual taxation of the fifteen¹ suburban municipalities of Montreal.

1- 10% is unacceptable

The Agglomeration of Montreal has again allocated millions of additional dollars in unjustified residential taxes to the suburban municipalities that are members of the agglomeration.

“For us, this is a matter of fundamental fairness. It has cost our citizens [of Beaconsfield] \$2 million more per year for three years, for no additional service, while Montreal, for these same years, lowers its contribution and obtains more services. This situation goes against the very principles of municipal taxation of the Government of Quebec: each taxpayer contributes to the cost of services according to the benefits he receives,” said the Mayor of Beaconsfield, Georges Bourelle.

For 2022 alone, the budgeted share of the Agglo in Beaconsfield increases by 10.18%. As a result, residential taxes for the Agglo paid by residents increase, on average, by around 10%. For 2021 it was a 2.24% increase, and for 2020 it was 8.75%.

¹ Baie-d’Urfé, Beaconsfield, Côte-Saint-Luc, Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Dorval, Hampstead, Kirkland, L’Île-Dorval, Montréal-Est, Montréal-Ouest, Mont-Royal, Westmount, Pointe-Claire, Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue et l’ancien Village de Senneville



There is no reason or additional service to justify these increases. These excessive tax burdens seem to have the sole objective of pushing the burden of balancing the budget of the City of Montreal on the citizens of the suburban municipalities. THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE

2- A cause: a Ministerial decree different from the 2008 demerger agreement

This excessive taxation was created in 2019 by the unilateral adoption of a ministerial decree different from the rules established in 2008 for the reconstitution of cities following the demergers of 2006. The new calculation algorithm distorted the historical fairness establishing the quota shares of the cities of the island of Montreal for the costs of regional services, such as the police, public transit, the fire service, the production of drinking water and the treatment of waste water.

3- 10% here and 2% there

The City of Montreal's 2022 budget provides for spending of \$6.46 billion for 2022, 1.3% more than last year, as well as an average increase of 2% in residential taxes for Montrealers.

How can we justify increasing taxes by 10% here and only 2% there? Are we cash cows? Are we being punished as bad citizens? What have we done to be so punished?

4- Heavy trend for more than 13 years

Table 1 shows the evolution of the typical tax bill of Beaconsfield citizens over the past 13 years. We use the average value of the residences defined in the assessment roll for comparison purposes. The black line shows the evolution of inflation with an origin at 2000.

PROPERTY TAXES ON RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE VALUE : 2009-2022													TAXE FONCIÈRE SUR LA VALEUR MOYENNE DES RÉSIDENCES À BEACONSFIELD : 2009-2022		
Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2009-2022
Beac	1 964	1 874	1 964	1 797	1 745	1 756	1 786	1 815	1 813	1 794	1 824	1 850	1 850	1 877	-4,4%
Agglo	2 291	2 575	2 690	2 776	2 809	2 840	2 876	2 852	2 989	2 997	3 036	3 302	3 375	3 709	61,9%
Total	4 255	4 449	4 654	4 573	4 554	4 596	4 662	4 667	4 802	4 791	4 860	5 151	5 225	5 587	31,3%
Inflation	1,32%	2,35%	2,30%	0,83%	1,24%	1,47%	1,61%	1,50%	1,87%	1,99%	2,25%	0,73%	4,80%		
Avg Value	353 495	381 425	408 645	429 715	450 785	483 480	510 683	537 885	571 647	571 647	571 647	732 212	732 212	732 212	

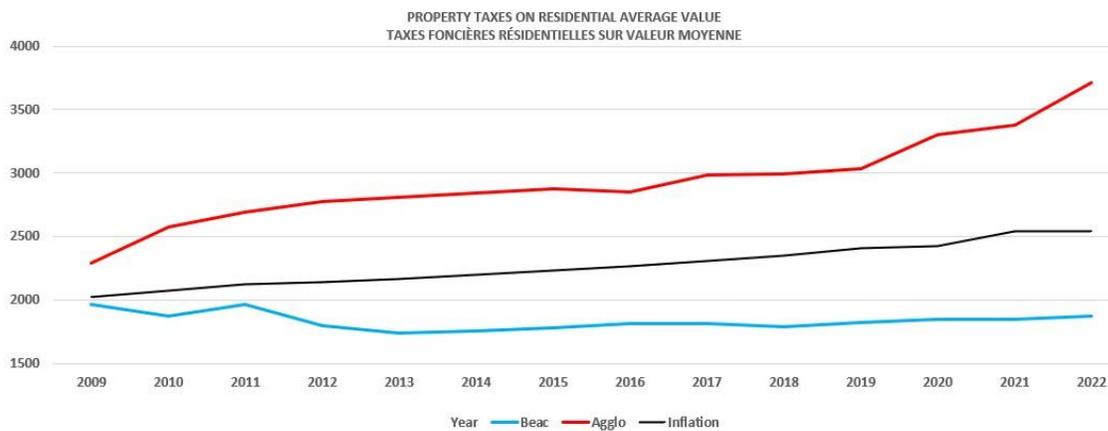


Table 1 – Evolution of the residential property tax on the average value 2009-2022



In the past 13 years, the agglomeration residential tax (red) for Beaconsfield residents has climbed 61.9%, a **compound** growth of 3.5% per year, while the inflation rate (black) for the same period was not even 2% per year. The local tax (blue) has changed little. We also see the **exaggerated increase of 22.2% in Agglo taxes since 2019**, while inflation in those 3 years is only 7.9%.

5- We have already called on you

In November 2019, the BCA wrote to you about this. The BCA also circulated a letter to the citizens of Beaconsfield and several dozens of them reached your office, Madam Minister. You created a working committee to resolve this situation. A meeting took place between you, Mr. Kelley, our MNA, Mayor Plante and Mayor Bourelle.

6- The city dragged its feet; it had no advantage in negotiating in good faith.

The mayor obviously had no interest in changing the situation.

“Any proposals that would restore fairness and justice would suddenly increase Montreal's contribution and reduce ours. This is the only reason why the City of Montreal stubbornly opposes it,” explained Mr. Bourelle.

Therefore, Mayor Plante has all the powers to unilaterally tax citizens who are not her constituents. But what kind of democracy are we talking about here?

7- You made the ministerial decree permanent in 2021.

Without even having resolved this injustice, the Minister issued, in the fall of 2021, a new ministerial decree that makes the new calculation method permanent. This injustice experienced by Beaconsfield is also experienced by other cities with high residential density² on the island of Montreal.

“This injustice is intolerable. It is inconceivable to pay more taxes, without additional services, just because of a faulty calculation algorithm which makes the sharing of regional service costs unfair. This reduces, without reason, the contribution of cities with many businesses and industries to the detriment of cities where it is the majority of citizens who pay municipal taxes,” according to Mayor Georges Bourelle.

8- Injustice will get worse

Mayor Bourelle also notes that this injustice “will worsen with the increase in property values, which will be listed in the next three-year property assessment roll (2023, 2024, 2025). Experts project an average increase in values of 30% for the residential sector and little change for commercial and industrial buildings. »

² This penalizes especially Beaconsfield, Westmount, Mont-Royal, Hampstead, Kirkland, Dollard-des-Ormeaux and Montréal-Ouest



9- Support the city's legal action

Faced with these facts and circumstances, we have no choice but to support the City of Beaconsfield's legal action to obtain redress and justice by forcing the government to respect the 2008 agreement for a fair sharing of agglomeration.

10- The root of the problem

All these recent measures show that the problem is structural, that the root cause of this situation is the Agglomeration of Montreal, this wobbly structure that is deeply unfair to the citizens of suburban municipalities. In 2008, the government brought together newly demerged cities in a structure where they are prisoners and without recourse to the city of Montreal. In this structure, 20% of residents are imposed annual excessive and unjustified tax increases without even increases in services.

There are two solutions to this problem:

- Either that the powers of taxation within the Agglo are redefined equitably,
- Or that the affected cities leave the Agglo and, ideally, regroup in a parallel entity which will negotiate services and costs with the city of Montreal.

11- Conclusion

Should we conclude that we, citizens of the demerged cities, are second-class citizens whose only use is to finance the central city? We hope not. But this must stop.

THAT'S ENOUGH!

Through this letter, we ask you, Madam Minister:

1. To repudiate the ministerial decree of 2021 and to force negotiations in good faith. And if no negotiated solution emerges from these discussions, then you impose the return to the calculation method prior to 2019, or else,
2. That the very structure of the agglomeration of Montreal be revised or eliminated, in order to allow the regrouping of the 15³ reconstituted cities into a new entity capable of negotiating as equals with the city of Montreal in terms of taxes and services on the island of Montreal.

So, first of all, we ask you, Madam Minister, to once again invite the City of Montreal and the City of Beaconsfield and our MNA to a working committee on the question of taxation and services of the Agglo, to encourage the former to apply corrective taxation measures in a spirit of fairness and fair taxation for all. What happens next will largely depend on your powers of persuasion, or your power, period.

³ Baie-d'Urfé, Beaconsfield, Côte-Saint-Luc, Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Dorval, Hampstead, Kirkland, L'Île-Dorval, Montréal-Est, Montréal-Ouest, Mont-Royal, Westmount, Pointe-Claire, Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue and Senneville



Thank you for your support and consideration in this matter.

Respectfully yours,

A citizen of Beaconsfield

Cc: Mr. Gregory Kelly, MNA for Jacques-Cartier

Cc: Mr. George Bouelle, Mayor of the City of Beaconsfield

Cc: Ms. Valérie Plante, Mayor of the City of Montreal

Cc: Association of Suburban Municipalities

Cc: Beaconsfield Citizens Association