

Mme NAFIJAH RAHMAN :

C'est ça. Bonne soirée!

780 **Mme ARIANE ÉMOND, coprésidente :**

Bonne soirée à vous. Maintenant je vais appeler Mme Idil Issa de Paroles de Femmes.
Bonsoir.

785 **Mme IDIL ISSA :**

Bonsoir, merci beaucoup. Je vais parler en anglais si vous me permettez, mais je comprends parfaitement le français. So if you ask me questions, I can understand.

790 Okay. I would like to thank you for allowing time for me to speak about an issue that is close to my heart. Currently, Muslim women in this great city of Montréal are experiencing a crucible over ten years in the making.

795 We pride ourselves on living in a meritocracy where anyone with the skill and drive can make their dreams come true. But we must now acknowledge that we have fallen short of this ideal. With the introduction of Bill 21, a law which prevents citizens from communities from occupying positions of authority. We are witnessing systemic discrimination and practice.

800 Born and raised in Canada, I remember being taught stories of the head tax applied to Chinese immigrants. And that Jewish and black people were once unwelcome at our great educational institutions.

805 I read these stories with the completeive mean that the distance of time and the judgment of history afforded me. But I have now come to understand that the racism of generations past has not been eradicated.

It has mutated and rebranded but it has not, unfortunately, been stamped out.

How great can our City ever become while some of us are systematically discriminated against? What is the value of the success of our City if not everyone shares in it?

810 While systemic discrimination persists, we cannot obtain our objective of being a just society where each member has equal opportunity to fulfill their potential.

815 When the GDP increases in ten with homelessness, we have not obtained this objective. When our unemployment decreases where Muslim women are still denied work, we have not obtained this objective.

When shooting deaths decrease, but a black man is still targeted, we have not obtained this objective. In other words, our success must be measured intersectionally.

820 I am not equipped or qualified to enumerate all of the ways in which the negative repercussions of systemic discrimination can be remedied. I have cobbled together my presentation today with spare time, snatched from a packed schedule, including full-time work and various volunteer positions.

825 What I would like to encourage those of you in municipal government to avoid, is passing this issue like a hot potato, neglecting to fulfill your duty because your demand is not within your jurisdiction.

830 While Bill 21 may be provincial law, its effects are being felt by citizens of this great city. It is your moral duty and also the responsibility of your Office to counter this law and any other law which by intent or effect, excludes Montrealers from full participation in all the city social goods.

835 It is also your duty to support those experiencing systemic discrimination as a result of this law. One initiative, which I can suggest, is funding for internship programs supporting affected Montrealers.

Examples are the most powerful tools we have to create change. Seeing citizens from affected communities employed through internships will help to change our perception of what is possible.

840 Sometimes, it takes one glimpse of someone who resembles you, in a position of authority, to change a child's conception of what is possible. I believe that an internship program which places young Montrealers from affected communities in the halls of power, would be a positive first step.

845 A second suggestion, is just striving to make City Hall as diverse as the population of this city. While I don't know if outright quotas would work, we should introduce a measure to peg the diversity in City Hall to the diversity of the city itself. Just as countries pegged their currency to the US dollar.

850 While we may not achieve an exact match based on all constitutionally protected classes, for example race, gender, sexual orientation and disability, we should set an outer limit of how much we will allow diversity to vary in relation to the diversity of the population at large.

855 For those of you who are international political economy nerds as I am, we should peg the diversity in City Hall to the diversity of the city at large within an acceptable band of deviance and trigger the release of funds to address under a presentation, if we dip below a certain level.

860 Just as spending a foreign currency reserve is sometimes necessary to maintain a stable exchange rate, tracking of these metrics might be accomplished through a voluntary annual report card or self-evaluation exercise.

865 In other words, leaving aside political economy references and making my point clear, we should create a diversity and inclusion fund, which will be triggered if levels of diversity within City Hall dip below the levels within the general population, within an accepted band of deviance.

These funds would be used to address under-representation, and create possible solutions, such that the under-representation in the future is linked solely to inclination and not exclusion.

870 Finally, I would like to issue a challenge to those of you steering this consultation to its final days. Sometimes it is said that the end of a process is also found in its beginning. This consultation was sparked by outrage at the lack of diversity in our City Hall. Symbolic of the power invested by citizens of Montréal.

875 We must remember this beginning now. While certain classes protected by our constitution had been, were represented during these hearings and during this process, let us not forget that the most marginalized downtrodden and needy members of our society may not be able to advocate on their own behalf, this does not mean that no need exists.

880 In other words, we must make sure that the findings of this consultation are intersectional.

When recommendations to address concerns raised by members of Montréal's differently able communities are raised, our members of this community who are also people of colour included, when recommendations to address concerns raised by members of Montréal's LGBTQIA community are raised, are LGBTQIA people of colour also consulted?

885 When recommendations to address concerns raised by members of Montréal's faith communities are raised, are members of colour from these communities also heard?

890 If there is no intersectional lengths applied; this consultation and its findings will lack the potency it would otherwise have in addressing the problems of today and tomorrow.

The findings and recommendations of this consultation must be intersectional to be of any use at all.

895

And finally, we cannot develop a list of recommendations without addressing the elephant in the room, the rise of Islamophobia. We can credibly address systemic discrimination in Montréal without answering the pleas of Muslim women waking up to threats of intimidation in their mailbox in the morning.

900

Suffering from street harassment and being denied jobs for which they are qualified, the pain and exclusion felt by the least of us should be the concern of all of us. The low participation of Muslim women of Montréal in this process is not a sign that all is well, it is proof that we are under water. Thank you for your time.

905

Mme ARIANE ÉMOND, coprésidente :

Merci beaucoup madame Issa. Je sentais jusqu'à quel point vous portiez ça profondément. On est très contents que vous soyez venue nous parler notamment de la situation des femmes musulmanes. Nous avons remarqué dans notre consultation, la difficulté qu'on avait eu à les atteindre malgré nos efforts. On n'était pas, comment je pourrais dire, on se doutait bien du poids de la Loi 21 sur leur désir d'aller raconter un certain nombre d'incidents qui leur arrive à la suite de ça.

910

915

Est-ce que mes collègues ont des questions qui vous brûlent les lèvres? Oui, Judy?

Mme JUDY GOLD, commissaire :

One question to ask you. You mentioned it was the duty of the City to counter la loi 21. How would you like the City to counter the law?

920

Mme IDIL ISSA :

I think that the City should take any means at its disposal, any resources, any clout as well, any weight that it holds in terms of its position as a major City in Canada to show leadership,

925

930 moral leadership. I think that on the federal stage, there has been a lack of leadership on this issue and integrity. If we look at the last election cycle and the incidences of blackface, I think there's an opportunity for the municipal level to really take the lead on this issue, and I think that it's going to be important, not only for the people concerned and affected by these discriminatory laws, but also for the City itself.

935 This world is only getting more diverse and I think that the ones who will head into the future, the most prosperous, will be the ones who are more able to deal, healthily and capably, with diversity. So I think it's not only an interest of Montrealers from diverse backgrounds, but it's also in the interest of Montréal itself to be a leader on this issue going into the, continuing into the 21st century.

Mme ARIANE ÉMOND, coprésidente :

940 Habib, avez-vous une autre question? Moi j'avais une question. Avais-tu une question? Vous avez parlé de la nécessité d'un plan sur la diversité à Montréal, pouvez-vous élaborer là-dessus?

Mme IDIL ISSA :

945 Yes, it's just an idea I had. I think that, as I mentioned, I don't know if quotas would work. The genesis of this consultation was the lack of diversity at a political level in City Hall. While I don't think outright quotas would be helpful, I do think that becoming more familiar with the metrics of what the makeup of City Hall, both at a staffing level and on a political level is, would help.

950 So, at the very least, to evaluate the issue and to have maybe an annual report card on it, and I suggested also allocating funds to address a lack of diversity if there is any gaps that are seen. So, I mentioned a band of variance so the idea that there is a certain level of diversity within the population at large, and to look at the makeup of City Hall and say « okay, what is an

955

acceptable variance from what is going on in the population at large? » Maybe a 10%, maybe a 20% and to allocate funds to address any major variances maybe, 50%. I'm just throwing out numbers. So that those funds could be allocated to make sure that if there is any gap within a certain part of City Hall, that that gap is only related to inclusion like people from that community aren't necessarily interested in occupying those positions, not due to exclusion.

960

M. JEAN-FRANÇOIS THUOT, commissaire :

Et à ce moment-là, l'utilisation des fonds que vous venez de mentionner, j'essaie de m'imaginer comment on peut l'utiliser. Avez-vous des exemples? Et ça serait pour stimuler des candidatures, pour aller plus loin? À quoi vous pensez ?

965

Mme IDIL ISSA :

Absolutely. I mentioned in internship programs. I think that a lot of these professional positions require a pipeline. So setting up a pipeline, so tracking young people from CÉGEP through to university, making them aware that these positions exist, you know internship programs would be helpful. Fostering maybe a specific hiring drive, that could also be something as well. These are the specific of exactly how the funds could be used. It's something that could be ironed out, but I do think having some sort of envelop dedicated to making sure that the variance between what's going on at City Hall and what's happening in the general population, isn't too out of whack.

970

975

Mme ARIANE ÉMOND, coprésidente :

Judy?

980

985

Mme JUDY GOLD, commissaire :

990 Along those lines, essentially, what you're preponing is a positive initiative as opposed to
obligatory quotas? Is that it? That's what you think would be a much more positive way, and
perhaps also touch along the question of intersectionality also that you mentioned. Is that, I am to
understand that, that's what you're preponing?

Mme IDIL ISSA :

995 Absolutely. I think that even just on a personal level, I never like to think of myself as a
diversity hire. You know, I wouldn't want to think of myself as that. So, I think leveling the playing
field in a way, creating opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to gain the skills that
would make them qualified to enter some of these positions is the idea, as opposed to just having
a quota. I think that often times, people, let say from indigenous backgrounds, or African
1000 Canadian backgrounds, some of the young people don't have exposure to some of the tools that
they might need, but had they been, they would be perfectly qualified to enter some of these
positions. So, I think that internship programs are just something that I could think of off the top of
my head. But I think that, that would be an interesting way.

1005 **Mme ARIANE ÉMOND, coprésidente :**

C'est bien. Merci beaucoup de votre contribution.

Mme IDIL ISSA :

1010

Merci.

1015