

Mme PATRIZIA VINCI :

4035 Je pense qu'il y a aucun doute que Blue Bonnets depuis tant d'années est dans le coeur
des femmes et des hommes qui habitent le quartier, qu'on est ici aujourd'hui, on a été mobilisé
depuis des années, on va continuer à être présent. Puis je pense qu'on apprécie la volonté
d'écoute. Donc, si la question c'est : est-ce que les femmes vont continuer à être présentes dans
le processus de Blue Bonnets, oui.

LA COMMISSAIRE :

4040 Oui. Et si la question c'était plutôt : est-ce que vous, vous avez les ressources pour
soutenir un genre de processus comme celui-là?

Mme PATRIZIA VINCI :

4045 L'organisme, c'est certain qu'on a besoin de ressources. On est juste trois personnes,
mais on a des membres très impliqués. Et donc, on ne va pas faire tout, tout seul. La force est
dans la solidarité. Donc, les femmes du centre vont être présentes.

LA COMMISSAIRE :

4050 Je vous remercie.

LE PRÉSIDENT :

4055 Merci beaucoup, Madame. Alors, la commission appelle monsieur Kurt John.

M. KURT JOHN :

4060 Bonjour, Hello.

LE PRÉSIDENT :

Bonjour.

4065 **M. KURT JOHN :**

Excuse me, it's my second time giving big speech, so I am going to go a little bit slow and it's in English. So.

4070 **LE PRÉSIDENT :**

It's okay.

4075 **M. KURT JOHN :**

Hi. Hello, I am Kurt and I am here today on behalf of myself and to give a voice to others who have passed away while fighting for social housing to be established on Blue Bonnets.

4080 I am here to represent my community. It has been a decade's long fight, but we are not going anywhere soon.

4085 Blue Bonnets is our greatest opportunity to give people a chance at decent housing. Many people in Côte-des-Neiges don't have good housing and the waiting list to get social housing is very long.

4090 This is a dire situation because most apartments in the neighbourhood have high rent and many have large issues with mold, insects and water damage. Add this to the condo buildings and gentrification going on in the area, and we are all afraid we are losing our neighbourhood.

There are many issues here, but only one solution: social housing is the one thing that can give people a hope. Right now, there isn't any in their current situations.

4095 This reality has effects on the whole community. The majority of people in Côte-des-Neiges are immigrants and it's really hard for people to integrate and Blue Bonnets would give them a sense of community and belonging. And the feeling of contributing to the community and without worries of being evicted.

4100 Blue Bonnets can give the neighbourhoods back its voice. And I can tell you first hand of being evicted. It can happen to anyone. It happened to me. A while ago, I found out the building where I was living in got sold. Soon after, the new owners gave us a notice to say he was going to do some renovations on the building. Soon after, myself and other tenants started to see a lot of heavy demolition during which at one point, they removed all the exterior bricks of the building during the middle of winter.

4105 Due to the cold and unsafe conditions in the building, people were forced to leave without any compensation given to them. Together, we tried to go to the city and deliver a complaint about the situation but nothing was done as the city said: « they didn't have enough inspectors to go around. »

4110 Eventually, we were forced to leave because the fire department came and declared the building inhabitable. We were left without a roof over our heads. This created a situation where the remainder of the tenants were forced to take up living situations in other buildings that were more expansive then our old building, but had even worst conditions.

4115 The tragedy of it all is that the majority of the tenants were families and they had their kids. They had to move into apartments that were in despair and infested with mold and insects because they had no other option.

4120 At the time my mother and aunt lived in the same building as well, during all this, as I was preoccupied with looking for housing for them, I had no time to find somewhere to live for myself. So I was left homeless for a while.

4125 My experience gives an honest picture of the housing situation in Côte-des-Neiges. We are not just statistics. This tragedy is happening to hundreds of people. Buildings every day are renovicted and the problem just grows.

4130 Clearly, the private market is not doing its job, it's profit over people and the City is not helping. Condos go up in our neighbourhoods but where do the people who live here for decades go? Gentrification is displacing us. We need to make sure this doesn't continue at Blue Bonnets.

4135 So, I come back to social housing. For most in the community, it is the last hope to survive and I want to be clear, I am talking about affordable - sorry - I am talking about low income housing.

4140 Not affordable housing because who is affordable housing really for? The reality is; our neighbourhood can't afford it. Affordable housing does not serve our community. And we know what our needs are here, we have a vision, Blue Bonnets needs to represent the people of Côte-des-Neiges. We can't let it slip through our fingers.

4145 If development is done poorly, it will be a great loss to our community. To clarify, some of those needs... projected here is a map of Blue Bonnets I made with other community members. I would like to explain some of its details to you.

4150 The first big thing is low income housing for the community of Côte-des-Neiges. This is essential for reasons I have already discussed.

4150 Secondly, we want innovative streets, a main street that is only for pedestrians and cyclists and a back street for behind the development for commercial delivery, accessibility, vehicles, a bus loop and for access to underground parking.

We also want a community center with a sport gymnasium for children and adults. And a community garden where people can grow fresh vegetables, it's very expansive, you know that.

4155 A network of bike paths through green space and a playground for kids. A small Medi Center should be included as well. We want spaces to be made for small local business like coffee and dépanneurs and lots of trees around the perimeter of the development to act against noise and air pollution from the Décarie expressway, very noisy with all the construction.

4160 Also essential, is housing for the elderly, for those who are disabled, for families and for people from all over. We need a neighbourhood that celebrates our diversity in Côte-des-Neiges. One way we can celebrate this is by intergrading local public art work from artists in the neighbourhood through murals.

4165 Good access to public transportation is also a must, very difficult for people crossing over the Décarie expressway and very dangerous.

4170 To conclude, when we made this map of Blue Bonnets, I suggested the name the Blue Miracle to the group. I chose this name because the development would be nothing short of a miracle for Côte-des-Neiges, a community struggling under the weight of the housing crisis. A community that has been ignored for far too long, a community that is now telling you what we need, a community that is not giving up the fight no matter how long it takes.

4175 Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

LE PRÉSIDENT :

4180 Thank you, Sir.

LA COMMISSAIRE :

4185 If we look into creating a very inclusive neighbourhood - which I hope will be happening
and you sure do - we are talking also about families who would have kids going to the EMSB
School Board. So, kids who would have to get, you know, education in English. So it means
busing kids outside of the neighbourhood that people would move in to. Do you think that would
prevent English speaking people to move to that settings over there Namur-Hippodrome if they
4190 were to have their kids bused to the school, which would be, I don't know, maybe - which one of
the school they would have to go to? but anyway. That would prevent people moving to the
neighbourhood and get to affordable housing as you expect?

M. KURT JOHN :

4195 Low income housing, not affordable. People always...

LA COMMISSAIRE :

4200 Oh yes, you are right.

M. KURT JOHN :

... say affordable, but it's...

4205 **LA COMMISSAIRE :**

I agree. So my question is about English speaking people moving there.

M. KURT JOHN :

4210 Well, on my opinion, I wouldn't think it would be difficult for families because most important for families is to have over their heads. If you don't have a roof over your head, you are not going to worry how far your kid has to go to the school. You first have to start on a principle point to have a sociable low income housing and then you can work from there. I am sure it will not be a problem, because in the Côte-des-Neiges, the community is a very closed net.

4215 So, and also, I mean, we can also put a point to the Québec Government if there is more people, English people moving in, we can make a bid to have a school built close by because we are losing a lot of English schools, which I find is a shame, you know. Because in Québec and in Canada, we speak both English and French. I don't see why one should be prominent over
4220 another. We should be both be freely to speak both languages as we choose. It should not be forced on people.

The government shouldn't be, you know, forcing... the Government's job is to provide for the citizens that vote for them, to protect the citizens and to get the citizens what the politicians
4225 promised them, which most of the time, never happens because... I campaigned for the Plante, you know Project Montréal with Sue Montgomery. I campaigned for her because she showed up at our events and she made promises with Mrs Valerie Plante said that they would help the community, build some social housing, low income, and you know, I mean, I am a little bit discouraged because that is a while ago and you know the problem has been ongoing for a long
4230 time and it still continues.

I mean, you don't have to be a smart, or you don't have to be an expert to know. If you go in the Montréal, in the public system, there is people sleeping on the floor. People sleeping outside, homeless people. I don't know if it breaks anybody's heart to see that, but nobody should
4235 be sleeping on, you know, on the floor and we are in Canada. I mean, we are not in like a third war country. I don't understand this. You, know, it's very hard to understand and I am just one person.

4240 And I see this. I don't need to be an expert. An expert always come, we always have consultations, they say they never have money but they have money to do consultations. You know, I am not trying to bring down any consultation, I am just trying to state the facts. They always say they never have money, but they have money to do everything else, but to provide for the people who vote for them. That is really not... you know.

LA COMMISSAIRE :

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Thank you.

LE PRÉSIDENT :

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Thank you very much, Sir. La commission va prendre une pause pour l'heure du souper. Nous allons revenir vers 19 heures.

AJOURNEMENT

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Je, soussignée, Cindy Lavertu, sténographe officielle, certifie sous mon serment d'office que les pages qui précèdent sont et contiennent la transcription fidèle et exacte des témoignages et opinions pris dans cette audience au moyen de la sténotypie.

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Cindy Lavertu