



**Montréal's Resilient  
City Strategy**

# MONTREAL

A focus on community resilience

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Montréal 

## THE SCIENCE

Communities around the world have experienced sustained losses following an extreme event. In 1900, Galveston, Texas, experienced a deadly hurricane, and for more than a century most of the economic development in the region has bypassed the once prosperous community. In 1997, the City of Kobe in Japan was one of the six largest ports in the world when it was struck by an earthquake. Presently, Kobe is the 55th largest port. Following hurricane Katrina in 2005, the population of New Orleans never returned to pre-hurricane levels, and many homes remain abandoned. In 2010, temporary housing was built for victims of an earthquake in Haiti, and thousands of families continue to live in these shelters.

Extreme weather events continue to have a tremendous impact on urban areas and their populations around the world. Cities are particularly vulnerable to these events due to the large populations, as well as the amount of critical infrastructure present in these areas. Planning and preparing for shocks and stressors at the municipal level contributes to building the resilience of communities and increasing their capacity to bounce back and thrive in the aftermath of extreme events.

The concept of disaster resilience is not well defined but is universally viewed as a positive attribute for a community. The Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction has been promoting community resilience over the last 20 years through various programs and partnerships, and strongly believes that communities should be confident in their capacity to recover quickly if a major hazard strikes.

## THE TRIGGER

Montreal has been subject to a number of shocks. For instance, in 1998, the City experienced severe disruption from an ice storm. In 2017, spring snowfall and heavy rains led to extensive flooding in the community. More recently, in the summer of 2018, a severe heat wave resulted in dozens of fatalities.

In 2013, the Rockefeller Foundation recognized the need to increase the resilience of cities around the world to extreme weather events and other shocks that have the potential to stress and weaken the fabric of urban areas. The Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities program emerged as a mechanism that would provide resources to assist cities with the development of strong resilience strategies. The Rockefeller Foundation started working with an initial group of 32 cities spread across the world in 2013. The following year, the program received over 300 applications from communities around the world, and Montreal became the first Canadian city to receive funding under the 100 Resilient Cities program. This funding allowed the City to appoint a Chief Resilience Officer, establish a resilience office known as the Bureau de la Résilience, and publish a Resilience Strategy. In this publication, the City of Montreal made the commitment to keep working towards enhancing the City's resilience to severe weather and other shocks.



**Figure 14:** In order to better understand what should be the key priorities of a resilience strategy in Montreal, the Bureau de la Résilience consulted with more than one hundred internal and external partners, and conducted extensive citizen consultations. (Source: Adobe Stock Photo)

## THE APPROACH

In order to better understand what should be the key priorities of a resilience strategy in Montreal, the Bureau de la Résilience consulted with more than one hundred internal and external partners, and conducted extensive citizen consultations. The discussions that took place led to the establishment of four objectives at the core of the Resilience Strategy: supporting a united and safe community, protecting the living environment, maintaining a diversified and innovative economy, and promoting integrated governance in the service of the community. While the Strategy aims to reduce the impact of extreme weather events on the City, the resilience planning efforts developed in Montreal extend well beyond the management of extreme weather risks.

The approach followed in Montreal is benefiting from its partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation. Cities around the world, including Montreal, have formed a network to share their experience in the development of successful resilience initiatives. The goal is to enhance the ability of participating cities to anticipate, prevent and adapt to challenges, stresses, and shocks that may affect the community. By means of this international collaboration, cities facing similar challenges are offered an opportunity to share their experience and learn from each other.

## THE OUTCOME

In 2018, the Bureau de la Résilience and the Office of the Mayor released Montreal's first Resilient City Strategy. The strategy presents a five-year plan to invest in concrete actions to enhance the city's capacity to cope with extreme weather and a number of other shocks. When it comes to increasing the resilience to extreme weather events, key objectives presented in the Resilience Strategy include fostering the development of social capital among Montrealers, improving consideration of risks in land use and infrastructure planning, carrying out more exhaustive cost-benefit analyses on mitigation measures, and promoting a good state of preparedness among businesses to deal with disturbances. The strategy presents a collaborative vision of urban resilience and adopts a sustainable approach that addresses social, economic and environmental concerns.

## A WORD FROM MONTREAL

When the Resilience Strategy was released in Montreal earlier this year, Mayor Valérie Plante explained, "We are gathering the tools to improve our response to shocking events such as natural disasters, tragedies, terrorist attacks, or situations likely to weaken our city, such as aging population, social exclusion, poverty and aging infrastructures. Moreover, our strategy will enable the population, institutions, businesses and systems to react and resist more effectively and efficiently to unforeseen events. Together, we want to be ready and to continue to develop our resilience."