



## MAYOR'S MESSAGE – MARCH 2006

On January 26 and January 27, the City of Montreal used its overwhelming majority on the Agglomeration Council to ram through the 2006 Agglomeration budget and its bylaws. As was our right under article 115 of Bill 75, the Baie d'Urfé Council passed two resolutions at a special council meeting on February 20 signifying our opposition to these bylaws. As was required by law, certified copies of the resolutions were sent to Nathalie Normandeau, Minister of Municipal Affairs, and to the clerks of each of the other 15 municipalities on the island of Montreal (including the City of Montreal). All this was done as required within 30 days of the adoption of the agglomeration bylaws.

The text of our appeal is available to residents at Town Hall. All the other 14 demerging municipalities have done the same.

Although there were many things that were objectionable with the agglomeration budget and the process by which it was determined and adopted, we were restricted by law to the types of objections that the Minister would allow. Examples of some of our legitimate objections that were not allowable under the law were:

- demerging municipalities had no input into the preparation of the budget,
- we had less than 72 hours to review a budget of close to 2 billion dollars,
- we were asked to adopt it without access to any of the raw data that was used to produce the budget, and
- we were given no plausible explanation on how almost every number in the first December agglomeration budget could differ from the January version yet the resultant agglomeration residential rate remained exactly the same.

The December version of the agglomeration budget was flawed. The January version increased even further the massive shift of tax burden from Montreal onto our residents, so that Mayor Tremblay could keep his electoral promise not to raise Montrealers' taxes.

The Association of suburban municipalities, of which Baie d'Urfé is a member, hired a team of experts to analyze the budget and help with the appeal process. A detailed analysis of the two agglomeration budgets clearly shows that the City of Montreal took advantage of its majority power on the agglomeration council to unjustifiably transfer at least 62.6 million dollars of its local expenses to the Agglomeration so that the suburbs could contribute to the payment of Montreal local services. Of these, 14.1 million dollars were to pay for garbage collection (4.3 million) and local street maintenance (9.8 million) for the Borough of Ville-Marie, a very rich borough which has a tax base almost equal to the sum of the 15 suburbs.

If the demerging cities are being asked to subsidize the expenses of Ville-Marie, a borough whose revenues well exceeds its expenses, then it would be only fair that the revenues that Ville-Marie collects be also included in the agglomeration budget (but this budget had nothing to do with fairness or reasonableness ... it was unfair, unjust, discriminatory, unlawful and punitive towards the demerging municipalities).

Many other anomalies were discovered between the two budgets, anomalies that resulted in an overall 105.7 million dollar over taxation at the agglomeration level ... resulting in Baie d'Urfé being overcharged by \$569,000. This over taxation has led to large tax increases in demerging municipalities, some as high as 30%.



We believe our appeal has merit and hope that the Minister gives it a fair hearing and forces Montreal to revise the agglomeration budget. In addition to the appeals, the mayors of the 15 demerging municipalities have met with the local MNAs to press our case and we will continue to do so. We also encourage the citizens to make their voices heard. One way to do this is to sign the petition at Town Hall, which we will forward to the Minister. Letters to our MNA, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and to Premier Charest would also help the cause.

If you have any questions or comments on this, please don't hesitate to call me at 457-6291.

Nancy Friedman

For the last 7 years when there was something important to communicate, whether it was to the citizens, to the government, to the media, my first order of business was to have Nancy review it and put her magic to it. I will miss her every time I write something ... as I miss her today and will forevermore.

Nancy was more than a trusted and respected colleague, she became a beloved friend and the wind beneath the demerger team's wings.

Her friends and family will miss her dearly. Baie d'Urfé will miss her quiet voice. I will miss her guidance, strength and her magical pen. To Joe and their children, Eleanor, David and Matthew, and to Nancy's extended family, our sincerest condolences.

Maria Tutino  
Mayor