



MONTREAL Electoral 2025 platform

→ **four**
priorities for sustaining
our independent venues



SUMMARY

of recommendations

p.2

**Support
a Pilot Community
Acquisition Project
for Grassroots
Concert Venues**

p.4

**Renew PME
MTL's Program for
Independent Venues and
increase its budget**

p.6

**Fund a Feasibility
Study on a potential
Contribution from
Large-Scale Event
Tickets**

p.9

**Modernize
the Municipal Draft
Noise By-Law to
Protect Cultural
Venues**



PREAMBLE

Les Scènes de Musique Alternatives du Québec (Les SMAQ) is the association representing independent music venues across the province of Quebec; about one-third of its members are in Montréal.

These spaces, which host over 80% of professional music concerts across the province, play a central role in the discovery, professional development, and circulation of emerging and established Montréal, Québécois, and Canadian artists — especially those from minority and marginalized communities. Rooted in the heart of Montreal's central neighborhoods, they are engines of cultural, social, and economic vitality. Their disappearance would undermine artistic diversity, the city's attractiveness, and its communities' social cohesion.

In preparation for the 2025 municipal elections, Les SMAQ invites the city's political parties and candidates to commit to four strategic priorities aimed at the protection, development and survival of Montreal's independent music venues, sometimes also called grassroots music venues.

01

SUPPORT A PILOT COMMUNITY ACQUISITION PROJECT FOR GRASSROOTS CONCERT VENUES



Context

Nearly 70% of Montreal's independent venues are tenants, leaving them vulnerable to steep rent increases—now common at lease renewal—as well as to imposed changes in land use and potential eviction.

No structural measures exist to secure venues' access to collective ownership, unlike in other cultural and community sectors.

Threat

At each lease renewal, venue operators face the real risk of having to leave their space. They therefore rarely invest in soundproofing, equipment modernization, or major renovations, since the resulting added value would accrue primarily to the landlord.

Without land security, long-term planning and investments are sidelined in favor of short-term survival, undermining venues' cultural mission and the sustainability of their business model.

Recommendation

Allocate \$1M for a 24-month long project to support the creation and development of a community trust dedicated to removing independent venues from the speculative real estate market to ensure their survival.

This funding would cover:

-  Creation of a trust ensuring ownership and non-profit organization ensuring management
-  Establishing transparent, representative governance
-  Developing a viable legal and financial framework
-  Conducting preparatory studies and strategic planning
-  Creating a “cultural lease” model to guarantee long-term cultural land use
-  Mobilizing public, private, and community partners

Objective: structure the organization by 2027 and carry out a pilot acquisition in 2028.

02

RENEW PME MTL'S PROGRAM FOR INDEPENDENT VENUES AND INCREASE ITS BUDGET



Context

Created in 2024, the municipal fund - entitled *Fonds de subvention destiné aux salles de spectacle indépendantes* - is one of the few financial levers available to Montreal's grassroots music venues, which are largely excluded from public funding programs.

However, its current \$855,757 envelope and funding caps are insufficient given soaring operating costs (+40% over three years) and growing land insecurity.

Threat

Without renewal and expansion, the program will not allow active venues to survive, support cultural employment and maintain diverse local cultural programming—all while growing communities, developing new audiences and improving working conditions for artists

Recommendations

- Expand coverage across PME MTL's entire network
- Raise funding caps to \$60,000 (individual projects) and \$150,000 (collective initiatives) per project
- Increase the program's envelope to \$3M over two years
- Broaden eligible expenses to include adaptation of venue spaces, improvement of working conditions, audience development, etc.
- Secure the program's annual funding cycle to increase predictability and medium-term planning capacity



03

FUND A FEASIBILITY STUDY ON A POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION FROM LARGE- SCALE EVENT TICKETS



Context

The Montreal live performance market is increasingly concentrated around a few vertically integrated players (ticketing, concert promotion, venue operations, sponsorships, data management, marketing), capturing a ballooning marketshare.

Independent venues perform essential artistic research & development: they take the financial and artistic risks at the base of the value chain, support local and emerging artists, and host bold, innovative projects. This groundwork feeds the entire ecosystem, including major stages at no cost to them.

Governments are under increasing financial pressures, particularly in the arts, making it crucial to explore alternative funding sources.

Internationally (UK, France, Australia, U.S.), cities and regional governments have introduced per-ticket contributions on large-scale events to fund grassroots venues and emerging artists' careers.

03

FUND A FEASIBILITY STUDY ON A POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION FROM LARGE- SCALE EVENT TICKETS



Threat

In a vertically integrated marketplace, independents are structurally disadvantaged: tighter access to artists and tours, less negotiating power, loss of sponsorship opportunities, and less capacity to capture data increasingly held by major players. Meanwhile, high-priced major events (mostly featuring international acts) cannibalize audiences and discretionary income, weakening independent venues, local economies and marginalized communities.

Ultimately, this reduces artistic risk-taking, opportunities for economic development, and the circulation of emerging artists. It leads to cultural atrophy and decreased neighborhood vitality, which harm the entire cultural ecosystem.

Recommendations

Finance a feasibility study exploring the potential of implementing a per-ticket contribution for concerts of 2,000+ capacity held in Montreal, with revenues supporting a fund for independent venues.

The study should include:

-  Analysis of similar international models and their outcomes
-  Definition of contribution parameters (thresholds, rates, event types)
-  Management, governance and redistribution mechanisms
-  Involvement of local stakeholders (venues, promoters, artists, ticketing companies) to ensure transparency and buy-in

Why act?

- A small price adjustment (e.g., \$130 → \$132 per ticket) could generate major impact for independent venues, artists and our cultural ecosystem.
- A well-designed redistribution mechanism would strengthen local cultural development, without burdening municipal budgets
- It would highlight the role of independents as artistic incubators fueling the broader sector.

04

MODERNIZE THE MUNICIPAL DRAFT NOISE BY-LAW TO PROTECT CULTURAL VENUES



Context

The draft noise by-law, introduced by the Plateau-Mont-Royal and Ville-Marie boroughs in June 2025, finally sets clear, measurable noise thresholds—an important change long advocated by Les SMAQ.

However, its Article 29 preserves discretionary powers allowing authorities, including SPVM officers, to subjectively deem noise “excessive” depending on time, place, and circumstance, without requiring sound measurement. It also allows them to immediately shutdown any activity on this basis alone.

Threat

In its current form, the draft by-law:

__ Does not protect venues against abusive complaints and police interventions, even when noise levels comply with regulatory thresholds

__ Imposes disproportionate fines (up to \$10,000 for a first infraction)

__ Lacks a formal dialogue/mediation mechanism essential to conflict resolution

This version of the proposed by-law would not have prevented the closure of iconic venues like La Tulipe.

Recommendations

- Explicitly exempt cultural venues from Article 29; evaluate complaints solely based on technical thresholds
- Reduce fines and adopt a gradual approach (warning, support, progressive sanctions)
- Implement a formal mediation mechanism activated following a first complaint, with an independent mediator, before sanctions are applied





Thank you!



438 380-1005



info@lessmaq.ca



lessmaq.ca



5520 Chabot street
H2H 2S7, Montreal

