

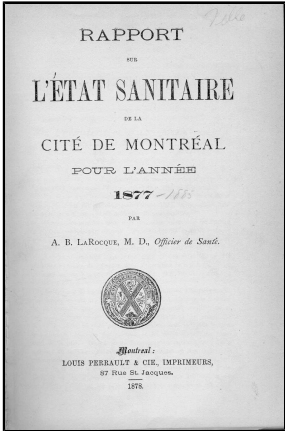


Mayor Hingston and Montrealers' health

A well-known doctor and surgeon, Mayor Hingston was very familiar with the dangers the city posed to the health of Montrealers. From the time he was elected mayor in 1875, he devoted himself to improving public health. He wanted to see a cleaner city and healthier citizens. Too many children were dying young.

To correct the situation, he reorganized the city's health services in 1876. He made the Board of Health into a permanent body. Six doctors, six city councillors and nine citizens were members. The council met twice a month, which was more often than it had met previously.

The job of the Board of Health was to complete statistics on mortality and contagious diseases. It published a report once a year on the state of sanitation in Montréal. Its employees could visit homes and public buildings to check on sanitary conditions. They could also require parents to vaccinate their children against smallpox.



Cover page from the report on the state of sanitation in Montréal in 1877.
Source : Ville de Montréal.
Gestion de documents et archives.

For a cleaner city: garbage collection

The cleaner a city is, the greater the chances are that its people will be in good health. Mayor Hingston transferred responsibility for garbage collection from the Roads Department to the Board of Health. The Board had to choose an entrepreneur to do the job and ensure that the regulations were respected.

Excerpt of the regulations concerning garbage collectors adopted on March 15, 1870.

Sec. 3. Once a week the entrepreneur will remove, from each house in the district assigned to him, all the trash and garbage and other household waste that will be deposited as indicated below; this service must be carried out between 10 o'clock and eight in the morning.

Sec. 5. Each occupant of the house must obtain a box, barrel or bowl to contain the household waste and detritus [...] that may accumulate on the premises or in the outbuildings, and place the said box with its contents on the sidewalk in front of the house, or in the alley in back of the said house, or in any other convenient place, at the time that will be specified by the health officer, so that the cleaning entrepreneur may come and remove them.

Sec. 12. The following are understood by the word trash: dead animals, dirt, sawdust, manure, soot, wood ash or coal dust, wood shavings, hair, clippings, oyster shells, shells, lobster remains, innards, and all animal or vegetable leavings or other harmful substances.



William Hales Hingston's accomplishments at the municipal level

William Hales Hingston was elected mayor in 1875 and re-elected the following year. At that time, mayors were elected for only one year at a time. As a doctor, he was very interested in public health during his terms as mayor.



"Baby is not afraid to be vaccinated".
Source : *Universal album*, September 23, 1905. Image from E.-Z. Massicotte's *Album de rues*, Bibliothèque nationale du Québec.

Less garbage

In order to make the city cleaner, Dr. Hingston instituted a regular system of garbage collection. Since the Roads Department had not been carrying out its responsibilities regularly, Mayor Hingston decided to assign this task to the Board of Health. He wanted to ensure that garbage did not pile up in the streets and promote contagion.

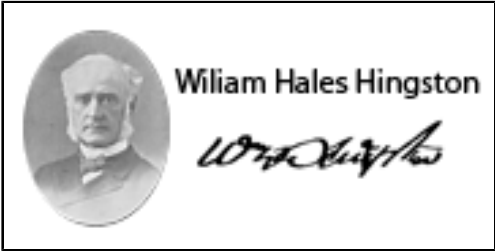
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Vaccinations for all

Many contagious diseases ravaged Montréal during the period when Dr. Hingston was mayor. They caused the deaths of a great many children.

In 1875, a smallpox epidemic broke out. This is a contagious disease that affects children in particular and that can be fatal. In order to avoid new epidemics, Mayor Hingston launched a campaign in support of vaccination. Most people didn't know about vaccinations at this time and were frightened of them, which did not make Dr. Hingston's job any easier.

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The campaign against smallpox

Mayor Hingston was convinced that vaccination was the only cure for this terrible disease that struck mostly children. He launched a public campaign in support of vaccinations against smallpox.

In principle, vaccinations had been required for several years but the law had never been applied. With the smallpox epidemic that had been going on since 1872 and that returned in 1875, obligatory vaccinations were put back on the agenda. People feared vaccinations, for a variety of reasons. Many unhappy people went so far as to protest in front of City Hall.

In addition to convincing parents of the importance of vaccinations, Mayor Hingston also had to convince some doctors who doubted their benefits. In order to do this, he published a brochure, *Remarks on Vaccination*, in English and French.



Cartoon showing Mayor Hingston as a knight combatting the dragon smallpox.
Source : *Canadian Illustrated News*, Vol. XIV, No. 17, November 4, 1876.

Vaccination

What is a vaccine? A vaccine contains the germs of a disease in weakened form. It allows the organism to make antibodies, which are cells that protect it from disease.

In our day, all children are vaccinated to immunize them against contagious diseases such as whooping-cough, measles and mumps. You are sure to have a booklet where the doctor has written in the dates when you received the different vaccines. Ask your parents.

Are vaccinations dangerous? No, there is no reason to be afraid. You only get a small pinprick that will protect you against contagious disease. Vaccination allows your system to develop antibodies.

You will not be vaccinated against smallpox but you are in no danger of catching it. It is the only disease that has completely disappeared, the world over, thanks to vaccination. The efforts of doctors like Mayor Hingston have truly paid off!



Danger! Montrealers' health is at risk

In the days when William Hales Hingston was mayor, Montréal was a city where people's health was in danger. Many children died very young: about one child in four died before reaching one year of age. Why? In the past, contagious diseases were far more numerous than they are today, and more often fatal due to the lack of effective cures. Other diseases, rarer today or more easily treated, like diarrhea, were also responsible for the deaths of many children.

The state of hygiene in Montréal was nothing like it is today. Many families lived in places that were too small, poorly ventilated and poorly lit. Toilets were often found outside, in the back yard. The sewer system was defective. In some neighbourhoods cows, pigs and chickens walked about in the streets and alleys. They could spread diseases. In addition some industries, soap making for example, were highly polluting.

In the 1870s, water and milk were also the source of many health problems. Water was neither filtered nor chlorinated. It carried dangerous bacteria that could cause typhoid, a disease that was often fatal in children. Milk was of poor quality: it was rarely *pasteurized*.



Montréal night-mayor on his ghastly rounds. Cartoon denouncing poor sanitation, dedicated to the board of health.
Source : *Canadian Illustrated News*, vol. XI, no 23, 5 juin 1875.

Pasteurization

Pasteurization consists of heating milk and cooling it very quickly. This destroys the microbes responsible for many diseases such as typhoid, cholera and tuberculosis.