



Photograph of Des Commissaires Street (today called De la Commune) around 1920. The railway is visible as is work being done to pave the street.  
Source : Ville de Montreal. Gestion de documents et archives, Z-484.

**The making of a modern city**

In 1898, Raymond Préfontaine was no longer a newcomer on the municipal scene. Montrealers could be thankful for the energy he had devoted to making Montréal a modern city during his chairmanship of the Roads Committee. Starting in 1889, he began major projects that citizens valued highly. For example, sidewalks were reconstructed using material that was more durable than wood. Main arteries like Saint-Denis, Notre-Dame, Saint-Jacques and Saint-Laurent were widened and covered with granite or wood blocks or with asphalt. Tunnels were constructed and electric streetcar lines installed. Public squares and parks, among them Lafontaine Park, were also beautified.



**Raymond Préfontaine’s accomplishments  
at the municipal level**

Before becoming mayor of Montréal from 1898 to 1902, Raymond Préfontaine was a city councilor and then mayor of the village of Hochelaga. In 1883, Hochelaga was annexed to the City of Montréal and became one of its districts. Raymond Préfontaine was one of three city councilors for this district until he became mayor.

**A highly efficient Chairman of the  
Roads Committee**

From 1889 until he was elected mayor in 1898, Raymond Préfontaine held one of the key positions on the municipal council, as Chairman of the Roads Committee (today the Department of Public Works). He helped to beautify and modernize Montréal. He directed a number of important undertakings, like redoing the streets and sidewalks, which improved traffic flow and made the city safer.

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The Port of Montréal.  
Source : Postcard stamped in 1901, private collection, Centre d'histoire de Montréal.

**A mayor for the port**

During the period when Raymond Préfontaine was mayor, Montréal was proud of being Canada’s biggest city. Its port was the busiest in the country. Raymond Préfontaine helped to transform the existing facilities and create a modern port, worthy of receiving ships from all over the world. As mayor of Montréal, he had the right to sit on the Port Authority that administered the port. He took his role of Port Authority commissioner very seriously.

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Flood in the streets of Montréal, end of the 19th century.  
Source : Ville de Montréal. Gestion de documents et archives.

### Old Montréal under four feet of water

**1886** – For Montrealers living in the lower town, near the Saint Lawrence River, the month of April meant more than just the arrival of spring ... In 1886, and not for the first time, the breakup of ice on the river brought flooding. Over the years, Montréal regularly fell victim to the rising waters. This year however, the floodwaters reached new heights and Old Montréal found itself under four feet of water! Many families had to leave their houses and property losses were enormous.



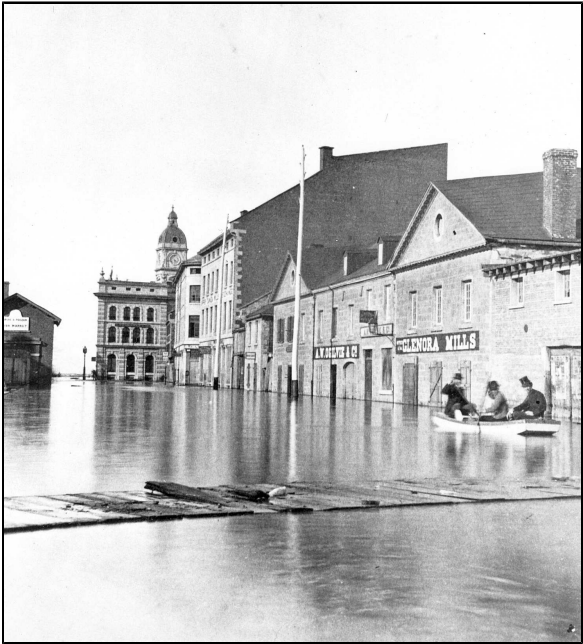
### New docks for the port

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, seagoing traffic increased and the port had to improve its facilities in order to handle the volume. The docks had to be rebuilt and raised. First to be built was Jacques-Cartier pier, in 1898 and 1899, followed by Alexandra pier, from 1899 to 1901 and finally King-Edward pier, from 1901 to 1902. After this, permanent warehouses could be built to solve the problem of storing merchandise. Raymond Préfontaine had reason to be proud of the work done by the Port Authority during his two terms as mayor.



The Port of Montréal at the end of the 19th century.  
Source : Postcard, private collection, Centre d'histoire de Montréal.

### A wall to protect the port from flooding



Flooding in Montréal (where the Centre d'histoire de Montréal is today, on Place D'Youville), end of the 19th century.  
Source : Library and Archives Canada, C-065477.

**1899** – The Port Authority, of which Raymond Préfontaine was a member, tackled Montréal's problem of regular spring flooding. It reached an agreement with the city to build a wall in the port that would protect the city against flooding. Between one and two metres thick, this wall would be 1561 metres long and 56 cm higher than the high-water level reached in 1886 during the worst flood Montréal had ever seen.