

A translation from the original in French article so as to accommodate Quincy's non-French speakers.

Renée Amilcar: from one glass ceiling to another

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[Le Droit](#)

She's a true pioneer in the transit industry who was hired by the City of Ottawa last fall to lead OC Transpo. In fact, this is the third time that Renée Amilcar has become the first woman to hold a position of importance in the community.

After being the first woman appointed to the bus maintenance department of a Quebec public transport company and the first to occupy the presidency of the bus committee of the International Union of Public Transport (UITP), Ms. Amilcar became the first woman to lead OC Transpo.

Renée Amilcar generally says she does not dwell on the glass ceilings she has been smashing since her debut at the Société de transport de Montréal (STM) in 2002.

“It's important because it gives me pride. It's always fun to be the first, but I also don't want to celebrate something that we shouldn't have to celebrate. I am very happy to be the first, but I hope that one day, we will no longer have to celebrate that women are first in fields where men are dominant. »

— Renée Amilcar, Executive Director of OC Transpo

In the federal capital, in addition to her gender and the color of her skin, her mother tongue also places her in a minority position within her workplace. Again, Renée Amilcar says not to dwell on it too much and only tries to be herself on a daily basis.

“I never wanted either to denature myself, to 'degender' myself. I remain a woman who is a manager. I'm not trying to manage like a man,” explains Ms. Amilcar. I put a lot of emphasis on communication, collaboration and listening too, a lot. It's my style. Is it a style that is more feminine? Maybe, but so far it's served me well.”

“Since I arrived, it hasn't been easy [...], but people have welcomed me as if I had been part of the family since I was born. It helped me greatly. People are generous with me, kind. Also, the directors general of the other departments in the City, everyone wants to help me. My employees, my assistant who is a real pearl. Everyone is there to make sure that I am well, ”adds the general manager of OC Transpo.

Renée Amilcar completed training in respiratory therapy and worked for a few years in this field before getting a job at the STM.



LAW, SIMON SÉGUIN-BERTRAND

Passion

“How do I motivate my troops? You have to be passionate, summarizes Renée Amilcar. I am passionate, since I was very young, I am passionate about everything I touch. I do volunteer work, I like it. I work, I like it. I like

being a mom, I like being a wife and so on. It has to be felt. We have to be able to transport and transmit this passion.”

However, the latter almost never had any contact with public transport, other than as a user. Prior to her engineering studies, Ms. Amilcar completed training in respiratory therapy and worked for a few years in this field.

“Quickly, when I started doing this job, I said to myself that I was capable of doing more. I had a desire to learn. [...] I applied for admission in medicine and engineering. I was accepted in engineering, but in medicine, as it is very limited, I was not taken. I told myself that I would do a year in engineering and that I would apply for another medical course later. The Polytechnic school, on the other hand, is so hard that it is not there that you improve your average”, launches Renée Amilcar laughing.

Chance did things well, however, since she says she discovered a field that suited her like a glove, she who has always been fond of mathematics and science. One thing leading to another, after graduate studies in administration, a stint in aeronautics and telecommunications, Renée Amilcar found the shoe that suited her at the STM.

“I'm sure my path to medicine would have been just as comforting, because I love serving people. That's why public transit fascinates me because every day, I make decisions that have an impact on many people,” explains Ms. Amilcar .

Collaboration is at the heart of Renée Amilcar's management style.



LAW, SIMON SÉGUIN-BERTRAND

The Amilcar method

In an interview with *Le Droit*, Renée Amilcar repeats ad nauseam that collaboration is at the heart of her management style. But it's not just limited to his team members at OC Transpo. This approach also extends to the carrier's partners, in particular the Rideau Transit Group (GTR), with whom it must work together on a regular basis to ensure the smooth operation of the light rail.

“My philosophy, I think everyone has adopted it now, is that we want to satisfy the customer first and, if we have to argue, we will argue afterwards,” says Ms. Amilcar .

Last week, for example, she says she took the trouble to call the president and CEO of the GTR after the consortium's lawyers filed documents in court that contain rather serious allegations against the City .

“I made it a point to call him to tell him that despite the filing of this document, we continue to work for the clients and that we let our lawyers do the rest, says Renée Amilcar. I'm tiring with that, because I say it every day: we do that for our clients. Our users, they don't have to be held hostage in our bickering. It's a team, it's not against each other. We are together.”

This approach will also lead to a restructuring of OC Transpo, the details of which will be unveiled shortly, said Ms. Amilcar .

“That, on the other hand, is not Renée Amilcar's structure, it's the structure of Renée Amilcar's management committee. It's for the right reasons. It is not because there is a new DG that everything has to be reshuffled. We all decided together what our ambitions are for the OC Transpo of tomorrow and what structure we need to put in place to ensure the viability of this OC Transpo of tomorrow. That, we did it together and, in less than five months, I am more than happy, ”supports the general manager of the carrier.

This transformation will include, for example, the creation of an engineering department that will oversee the optimization of OC Transpo's practices.

“This branch will be able to do the necessary analyzes and seek proactivity which, unfortunately, when you're in the heat of the moment, it's more difficult. I will have people at the front who are there to put out fires, but I will also have people in the background to warn them,” says Renée Amilcar.