



**Press release
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Homelessness: Where have the pledged funds gone?

Montreal's three largest men's shelters are calling for funds to be provided in accordance with the *Reference Framework on Homelessness*

Montreal, Wednesday, December 3, 2008 – The three Montreal men's shelters are joining forces in calling on party leaders to make homelessness a significant priority, if they do not want to be responsible for further escalating the problem. In fact, the lack of appropriate funding by the provincial government – funding which has already been pledged to the shelters – is jeopardizing the shelters' range of services.

The Old Brewery Mission, Maison du Père and Welcome Hall Mission would like to remind the government that they have yet to receive the 3.3 million dollars requested in order to be able to continue to offer emergency services, despite the commitment of former Minister Dr. Philippe Couillard to increase their funding this year.

According to Matthew Pearce, Old Brewery Mission's Director General, "Without providing regular and adequate funding to cope with the tremendous work at hand, the government is only contributing to dressing the wound, not healing it. What is to become of the transition and social reintegration programs which have so carefully and painstakingly been developed to try and create a permanent solution to the homelessness problem?"

The one million dollar grant provided last year allowed emergency shelter services to provide the required number of beds during the winter months across the three organizations. At that time, former Minister Couillard had pledged to do better with the next budget as well as to create a working group to address the critical issue of homelessness in Montreal and assess long term needs.

On September 18th, the new Minister of Health and Social Services, Dr. Yves Bolduc, unveiled the *Reference Framework on Homelessness in Quebec*, which provides guidelines and priorities to be addressed.

Unfortunately, and contrary to what had been suggested, the *Reference Framework* was not accompanied by any new funding. It is the understanding of the three major shelters that funds promised by former Minister Couillard had simply disappeared with the announcement.

“No doubt, the annualized amount of one million dollars granted for the three shelters in 2007, as well the reference framework presented are good will gestures; however, this amount is not sufficient to cover the emergency services we provide to the homeless.”, says Cyril Morgan, Executive Director of Welcome Hall Mission.

It should be noted that the state of homelessness in Montreal has reached such significant proportions that the three shelters alone provide homeless people with a combined 1700 meals and 550 emergency beds daily. Quebec government funding for emergency services at the shelters ranges roughly between \$8 and \$12 – compared with the \$27 per day requested. For the same services, Toronto shelters are receiving \$61.70 daily. At present, the Quebec government’s funding covers a mere 12% to 20% of each of the three shelters’ budgets.

“The work we perform represents an essential service and it is underfunded year in year out. As a result, an irreversible step backwards is being taken in the face of an ever increasing problem. Hence, instead of being bridged, the gap is growing. It is high time the government adopt a concrete position and shoulder its responsibilities, with dollars attached.”, declares Geneviève Grégoire, Executive Director of Maison du Père.

In his declaration of November 2nd 2007, Minister of Employment and Social Solidarity, Mr. Sam Hamad, stated that his objective was to “make Quebec one of the industrialized nations where the fewest number of people live in a state of poverty and social exclusion.”

Montreal’s three largest homeless shelters are therefore asking all parties to take a position with regard to homelessness and provide workers in the field with the necessary means to carry out this mission.

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