



**Press release
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The increasing phenomena of Homelessness

The large Montreal Homeless shelters want to hear the mayoral candidates' positions on homelessness.

Montréal, (Québec), October 13, 2009 – During the municipal election campaigns, the three large shelters serving the homeless population of Greater Montreal (the Old Brewery Mission, Welcome Hall Mission and La Maison du Père) want to know the mayoral candidates' positions and intentions regarding the phenomenon of the growth of homeless in the city.

« There are approximately 25,000 homeless Montrealers which is greater than the capacity of the Bell Centre. The average age of a homeless person has dropped to 37 and there are more women falling into homelessness. Consequently, it seems to me that it would be important to hear the candidates explain what they intend to do to help shelters to deal with this critical social dilemma.» declared Matthew Pearce, Director General of the Old Brewery Mission.

Clearly, periods of financial crisis or set backs have a significant impact of citizens already in great difficulty, often those suffering from mental illness, alcoholism or drug and gaming dependencies which have, as a result, led then into the spiral of homelessness. To date, no mayoral candidate has spoken publicly on the matter which, according to the large shelters, merits their attention and comment.

According to Cyril Morgan, Director General of the Welcome Hall Mission, « We are convinced that the candidates are already sufficiently preoccupied by the magnitude of the problem of homelessness to provide their position and action plan right away.»

The large Montreal shelters of today are no longer solely centers for the provision of emergency food and lodging. Though these services remain a critical need and are a priority, shelters now also run effective programs aimed at the social reintegration and permanent affordable housing helping homeless individuals to leave the streets. Still, the three large shelters currently receive between \$1.24 and \$2.36 per person per night from the municipality for emergency services. The actual costs are in the order of \$55 to \$57 per person per night.

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