



Press release for immediate distribution

300 Montreal community organizations demand to meet with Philippe Couillard

Montreal, November 3rd 2015 – more than 300 community organizations in Montreal have closed their doors today and are meeting in front of the offices of Premier Philippe Couillard to “hand over the keys”. The chronic underfunding of the community sector, alongside recent cuts to social programs, threatens the survival of many groups and prevents them from fulfilling their mission of serving vulnerable populations.

“The community sector is not immune to our current economic situation. Even before the election of the current government, groups were demanding improvements in recognition and funding. For too many years, groups have been juggling inadequate funding that is not indexed to the cost of living and an increasing number of people knocking at their doors. Organizations are overwhelmed. If nothing changes, many of them could be forced to close their doors”, explains Sébastien Rivard, coordinator of the Regroupement intersectoriel des organismes communautaires de Montréal (RIOCM).

The demonstration today is a part of two campaigns: “I care about my community, I support the community sector”, and “Our rights can be defended!”. Jean-Yves Joannette of TROVEP-Montreal says: “Our actions illustrate the solidarity between different groups across sectors: health and social services, service-advocacy organizations, children and families, education, environment, and others”. Across Quebec, there are 1300 organizations that have closed their doors to make the following demands:

1. The respect of the autonomy of community organizations and the recognition of their work as a motor for social change.
2. As is their right, core funding, in full, for community organizations.
3. Annual indexing of funding that matches increases in costs of living.
4. An end to budget cuts and a major re-investment in public services and social programs.

In Montreal, organizations working in health and social services, service-advocacy organizations, as well as family and women’s services are particularly interested in targeting the Premier to force him to intervene with the Ministers responsible for these community services. Ministers Lucie Charlebois, Sam Hamad and Francine Charbonneau must sit down with representatives of the sector in order to find solutions to chronic underfunding. Nancy Harvey, speaking for the Coalition of Community Organizations working with Families in Montreal (ROCFM) reminds us of the very real needs of these groups: “We are asking the government for a recurring increase in funding of 225 million dollars for health and social service organizations, 40 million for rights-based organizations, 18 million for family organizations and increased budgets for organizations under all other ministries”.

By cutting services and attacking the rights of people living in poverty, austerity measures attack community organizations. The more the needs of people increase, the more organizations are sought out for services, without any corresponding increase in funding. The community sector simply doesn't have the means.

— 30 —

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