

To the news editor

Press release

**The Federal Government must promptly step up the struggle against homelessness**

OTTAWA (November 25, 2009) – At noon today in Ottawa, the *Réseau SOLIDARITÉ Itinérance du Québec (RSIQ)*, supported by the *Coalition pour Prévenir l'Itinérance chez les Francophones d'Ottawa (CPIFO)* and *The Alliance to End Homelessness (ATEH)*, underlined the urgent need for better federal funding of the homelessness program. As many as one hundred people gathered outside the Department of Finance before heading towards Parliament Hill for a press briefing. Gilles Duceppe, Chief of the Bloc Québécois, Gerard Kennedy, spokesperson on homelessness for the Liberal Party of Canada and Morgan Leslie, NDP's MP from Halifax, were present.

The Federal Government is in the process of reviewing its housing and homelessness programs, including the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), extended for another five years, until March 31, 2014. « The RSIQ is particularly concerned with the direction the HPS will take between 2011 and 2014. We believe federal funding in Quebec should reach, at the very least, 50 Million dollars annually, in order to better respond to emerging needs, » according to André Trépanier, *RSIQ* coordinator.

Indeed, the limited 18 Million dollar envelope has made it impossible to fund new projects in most regions. The budget cap has also blocked any funding increases for non-profits already supported by the HPS. In fact, food bank use has increased, shelter line-ups are longer and homelessness is a growing concern.

Furthermore, the HPS must maintain its commitment to supporting a wide variety of projects for and with people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, all the while pursuing the renovation of existing infrastructures and the creation of social housing.

Moreover, it is important that the Federal Government also fund grassroots networks, essential contributors in ascertaining needs and acting coherently within the community. The Federal Government must continue to allow local communities to determine their own needs and to develop appropriate projects, as is the situation to date. The Federal Government must also publicly state its intentions for the HPS 2011-2014 as soon as possible, so implementation can begin as of April 1st, 2011, hopefully avoiding past delays.

With today's public gathering and other community events, the *RSIQ* urges the Federal Government and the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Diane Finley, to maintain and step up the struggle against homelessness as the economic crisis continues. Ms Finley did not respond to a meeting request earlier this Fall.

- 30 -

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