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**No One Must Be Left Behind**

**Cry from the Heart from Night of the Homeless  
in the Outaouais**



On October 15, the Collectif régional de lutte à l'itinérance en Outaouais held the 19th Night of the Homeless at Fontaine Park in Gatineau. The event did not take place last year because of the

pandemic. This year, with the participation of several hundred people, of which nearly 250 walked in solidarity through the streets of Vieux-Hull, the event was a great success.

The Night of the Homeless is an evening dedicated to raising awareness about a situation affecting more and more Quebeckers, one of poverty, social disaffection and homelessness. Every year since 1989, the Night has been organized around an evening solidarity vigil, featuring a variety of activities. Everyone is invited to spend the night together to raise their voices against poverty and show solidarity with the homeless. The event is also a means of highlighting the precarious conditions that homeless people face on a daily basis.

Beginning at 5:00 pm, food, clothing donations, COVID vaccinations and much more were made available to the homeless population of Gatineau.



People were encouraged to donate warm clothing that they no longer wear, which was distributed during the evening to those in need. There was also a moment of reflection to pay tribute to those who have passed away since the last event two years ago.

The theme adopted throughout Quebec was “Seeing Beyond Appearances,” to highlight the economic, political and social causes of poverty and the fact that people experiencing homelessness have rights as human beings and as members of society and that we must all work together to defend these rights.

*(Photos: CRIO)*

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## **Seeing Beyond Appearances Is Recognizing a Person’s Right to Full Control Over Their Lives, Is Placing Human Beings at the Centre of Our Decisions**

***- Alexandre Deschênes, Words of Welcome to the 19th Night of the Homeless in Gatineau -***

It is with great emotion that the Collectif régional de lutte à l’itinérance and its allies are organizing this Night of the Homeless. The theme of this year’s national event is “Homelessness, Seeing

Beyond Appearances.”

When we limit ourselves to appearances, we get stuck in stereotypes and prejudices. To remain caught up in the appearance of what homelessness is, is to forget the human being behind the person experiencing a difficult situation.

In the person experiencing homelessness, we see a form of social exclusion, we see discrimination because of an inhuman condition influencing the individual’s psyche, causing deep wounds and stigma. We see resilience and an untold, immense, commendable, impressive survival instinct to compensate for the lack of resources that should be guaranteed by this society.

To see beyond appearances is to break out of the logic of “merit” and to recognize the legitimate right a person has to full control over their life. It is not up to us to decide what response a person should receive to their basic needs. It is not up to us to make value judgments based on our own conception of morality. Social judgment, how others see us, can be violent. Seeing beyond appearances is also the refusal to do violence to another. It is to put the human being at the centre of our decisions. It is to show humility towards others.

Looking at the phenomenon of homelessness is to look through the mirror of what is lacking socially, economically and politically. It is to look at brothers and sisters left behind, at how fundamental rights are violated, denied, reduced to an issue of social acceptability. Then we hear: It’s unacceptable to rummage through garbage, it’s unacceptable to sleep in a tent, etc., without any concrete solutions being put forward.

But what is unacceptable? Seeing citizens like you and me have their right to housing denied, their right to dignity relegated to a matter of budget, their right to live and not only to survive, ignored. What is unacceptable is to see the need for recreation take precedence over basic needs. What is unacceptable is to separate citizens according to socio-economic strata to better crush them.

In the Outaouais, we have been saying for a long time that no one is immune to homelessness. With the growing wealth gap and the housing crisis, this statement remains relevant, and will always be relevant. Homelessness is a phenomenon that will not disappear through clever accounting calculations revising the poverty index. Nor will it disappear through political wishful thinking, while maintaining an economic system that fosters its occurrence.

So what is left for us to do? The impacts of homelessness can only be reduced through strength and action, through the hard work of all those active in the field. The community cannot and does not want to respond alone to the task. What we refer to as partnership is more essential than ever. Because, well beyond the statistics, one finds people who are strong and proud who deserve our admiration and support by dint of their history, which is just as valid as ours.

We wish all of you here tonight an excellent Night of the Homeless. We will start this march together, united, and we will shout loud and clear that we are worthy, that we have the right to be regarded for what we are: human beings standing tall and beautiful, and that we too are part of this society, without condition.

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