



ESCC's Statement on Quebec's Emergency Funding to Address Homelessness

Submitted by

The English-Speaking Catholic Council

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The English-Speaking Catholic Council (ESCC) welcomes the Quebec government's announcement of \$28 million in emergency funding to address homelessness ahead of the winter season. The allocation of resources for shelters, warming centres, outreach services, and emergency housing initiatives is an important and necessary response to a growing humanitarian crisis affecting thousands of people across Quebec.

While welcoming this investment, the ESCC calls on the Government of Quebec to outline a long-term strategy with clear goals, measurable outcomes, timelines, and long-term commitments to reduce homelessness and address the growing pressures of housing affordability and rising living costs.

As a Catholic organization committed to the dignity of every human person, the ESCC believes that homelessness is not merely a housing issue. It is a human issue that affects health, safety, family stability, mental well-being, and social inclusion. Every person deserves access to safe shelter, essential support, and the opportunity to live with dignity.

The recent death of an unhoused woman in Sorel-Tracy, together with the many lives lost over recent years and the increasing presence of tent encampments in communities across Montréal, serves as a tragic reminder that homelessness has life-and-death consequences. Such realities call not only for emergency interventions but also for sustained, long-term solutions that address the root causes of housing insecurity, poverty, mental health challenges, and social isolation.

The rise in homelessness cannot be separated from the growing cost-of-living pressures facing Quebecers. Across the province, many households are struggling with higher rents, escalating grocery costs, utility bills, transportation expenses, and inflationary pressures that continue to outpace income growth for many low- and moderate-income earners. A family that once managed comfortably may now be spending well over half of its income on housing. Seniors on fixed incomes are facing difficult choices between rent, food, medications, and heating costs. Single-parent households often struggle to absorb rising childcare, grocery, and transportation expenses, while newcomers and vulnerable workers face increasing barriers to securing affordable housing in already strained markets.

Increasingly, people who are employed, seniors on fixed incomes, newcomers, persons living with disabilities, and single-parent families find themselves one unexpected expense away from housing insecurity. Whether it is a sudden rent increase, a job loss, an illness, or an unforeseen emergency, far too many Quebecers are living on the edge. What was once a challenge affecting a limited segment of the population now touches individuals and families who never imagined they would be at risk of losing their homes.

The ESCC recognizes that homelessness exists on a continuum. Before a person sleeps in a shelter, a vehicle, or on the street, they often experience months or years of financial strain, choosing between rent and food, delaying medical care, accumulating debt, or relying on family and community supports to survive. Addressing homelessness therefore requires not only emergency responses, but also policies that improve housing affordability, strengthen income security, expand access to social and supportive housing, and protect vulnerable residents from being pushed further into poverty.

The ESCC supports efforts by all levels of government, municipalities, community organizations, faith communities, and social service providers to work collaboratively in responding to this crisis. Emergency funding is a crucial first step, but lasting progress will require ongoing investment in affordable and supportive housing, prevention strategies, mental health support, addiction services, and year-round resources for vulnerable populations.

Rooted in Catholic social teaching, the ESCC affirms that society is judged by how it treats its most vulnerable members. Housing is more than a commodity. It is a fundamental requirement for human dignity, family life, personal security, and participation in society. At a time when rising living costs are stretching households beyond their limits, public policy must ensure that economic pressures do not leave our most vulnerable neighbours without shelter, safety, or hope.

As winter approaches, we call upon governments, community partners, parishes, and citizens to continue supporting organizations serving people experiencing homelessness through advocacy, volunteerism, and acts of solidarity. We must move beyond crisis management toward long-term solutions that ensure stable housing and meaningful support for all.

Together, we can help build a Quebec where every person has not only a roof over their head, but also the opportunity to flourish in safety, dignity, and belonging.

English-Speaking Catholic Council (ESCC)

Advocating for the common good and the dignity of all, especially those most vulnerable among us.