

Women's Homelessness: An Unprecedented Alliance Calls for Funding That Meets the Scale of the Need

Board chairs and executive directors from 13 Montreal organizations serving women experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity unite to demand adequate funding.

Montreal, September 14, 2026 — With the provincial election campaign underway, the executive directors and board chairs of 13 Montreal organizations serving women experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity are joining forces to issue an urgent call to all political parties. Faced with a dramatic increase in needs and financial instability that now threatens their ability to maintain essential services, these leaders are calling for an immediate commitment: to guarantee, beginning with the next budget, core funding that is fair, recurring, predictable and indexed to the cost of living, based on the actual cost of delivering services and the specific needs of women.

For the first time, board chairs, many of whom are leaders with extensive experience in business, finance and management, are sounding the alarm alongside executive directors. Together, they are denouncing a funding model that has become outdated and no longer reflects the reality of the services now being delivered by community organizations.

Together, these 13 organizations serve and support tens of thousands of women each year across the Greater Montreal area. Their services range from drop-in support and emergency shelter to programs that help women achieve housing stability. Yet none of these organizations receives the predictable funding needed to ensure its long-term sustainability. For the Alliance, addressing women's homelessness must be recognized as a collective responsibility—one that concerns not only community organizations, but also public institutions, economic stakeholders and society as a whole.

The Alliance supports and will collaborate with the coalition led by former Quebec Premier **Pauline Marois** to hold a national summit on homelessness aimed at establishing an integrated approach among municipalities, community organizations, and the health, social services, and justice sectors. Pauline Marois welcomed the initiative:

“This Alliance between board leaders and executive directors of organizations serving women offers a clear assessment of the situation and a concrete proposal to address homelessness—one that can be acted upon quickly. I encourage all political parties to listen to their voices and draw on their expertise to accelerate the implementation of the solutions they are proposing, starting immediately after the election,” said **Pauline Marois**, 30th Premier of Quebec.

The Alliance's Calls to Action

The Alliance calls on all political parties to consider the following measures:

1. Core operational funding based on the actual cost of delivering services and systematically indexed to the cost of living.
2. Reduced reliance on project-based funding, which keeps organizations in a state of chronic financial insecurity.
3. Greater equity among organizations providing comparable services, ending unjustified historical funding disparities.
4. A review of public funding programs to reflect the growth and increasing complexity of needs, as well as how services have evolved on the ground. The classifications used for organizations are too often frozen in time and fail to account for the expansion of their services.
5. Formal participation by organizations specializing in women's homelessness in decision-making bodies and processes related to homelessness funding, programs, and policies, ensuring that women's realities are fully considered.

"We propose working with public authorities to develop a more predictable funding model that takes into account both the Consumer Price Index and the actual growth in organizations' operating costs. This is essential for long-term planning and for maintaining high-quality services," said **Élisabeth Deschênes**, Chair of the Board of Directors of Le Chaînon.

Without significant adjustments, the outcome is inevitable: more organizations will be forced to reduce services at precisely the moment when needs are greatest, further worsening social challenges.

A Funding Model Incompatible with the Mission

Current funding for community organizations relies primarily on the Community Organizations Support Program (PSOC), supplemented by various temporary funding envelopes, including winter measures, the Reaching Home program, and the Canada–Quebec Agreement on Unsheltered Homelessness and Encampments.

Although many of these measures are renewed from year to year, they do not enable organizations to plan their services on a sustainable, long-term basis or retain their staff. Developed in a different era, this funding model no longer reflects either the scope of responsibilities assumed by community organizations or the growing complexity of the services they provide.

In some organizations, the funding received per woman sheltered covers less than 40% of the actual costs associated with shelter, services, and support. The remaining gap must be filled through philanthropy, fundraising activities, and one-time funding envelopes whose renewal is never guaranteed.

Yet these organizations operate around the clock, 365 days a year, with the same standards of professionalism and accountability expected of major institutions and public services. They support women facing complex challenges, including trauma, domestic and sexual violence, psychological distress, substance use issues, financial instability, and housing insecurity.

“These organizations absorb social and humanitarian crises that the state increasingly delegates to them while asking them to continually ‘do more with less.’ While a profit-driven approach may apply in the private sector, it is fundamentally incompatible with the mission of community organizations,” said **Nadine Gelly**, Chair of the Board of Directors of the **YWCA Montreal**.

More Complex Needs, Teams Under Increasing Pressure

The reality on the ground has changed. Organizations report a significant rise in mental health challenges, substance use and violence, alongside an unprecedented housing crisis.

Some organizations also support women accompanied by their children, requiring interventions tailored to the entire family unit and adding another critical dimension to the support provided.

Today, each situation requires significantly more support than it did only a few years ago, greatly increasing workloads without corresponding increases in funding.

“Women need emergency shelter, specialized psychosocial interventions, **and** assistance in accessing healthcare and the justice system, as well as support in finding employment. This support requires time, specialized expertise, and continuity of services, all of which are jeopardized by budget instability,” said **Jill Hugessen**, Chair of the Board of Directors of **Chez Doris**.

Organizations invest heavily in training their staff, but when employees leave because of uncertainty, the expertise developed in serving the most vulnerable women is lost. This creates a costly cycle of turnover, recruitment and training that undermines service quality.

Funding Is a Social Investment, Not an Expense

The Alliance is calling on decision-makers to recognize the essential role these services play. By intervening upstream, these organizations reduce pressure on emergency departments, hospitals, law enforcement and the justice system, thereby lowering overall public costs.

Funding allocations continue to depend largely on the category under which an organization was initially classified, in some cases decades ago, rather than the actual services it provides today. For example, an organization originally recognized as a drop-in centre may

receive **\$0 in funding for the shelter beds and housing support teams** it has since developed.

According to data compiled by the Alliance, funding disparities between organizations providing comparable services can reach as high as **43%**.

For more information about the recommendations **of the Alliance of Board Chairs of Organizations Serving Women Experiencing Homelessness (APOIF)**, please consult the accompanying background.

Alliance Member Organizations

- Auberge Madeleine
- Chez Doris
- Centre des femmes de convictions de Montréal
- La maison Marguerite
- La rue des Femmes
- L'Abri d'espoir (Salvation Army)
- Le Chaînon
- YWCA Montreal
- Les maisons de l'ancre
- Logifem
- Logis Rose Virginie
- Passages
- Patricia Mackenzie Pavilion (Old Brewery Mission)

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Geneviève Bordeleau, PRP, conseillère principale, Ryan Affaires publiques

(514) 318-2737 – genevieve@ryanap.com