

# International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we claim the dignity and well-being of people with disabilities

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MONTREAL, Dec. 02, 2022 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Celebrated every year since 1992 at the initiative of the United Nations (UN), December 3 is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. It aims to promote understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. On this day, the Confederation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities of Quebec (COPHAN) speaks on behalf of its 41 national and regional member organizations and groups of people with all types of functional limitations.

## **Many people still looking for their inclusion**

According to the Canadian Survey on Disability (CIS2017), approximately 1,053,350 Quebecers aged 15 and over have at least one disability. This is 16.1 % of the population of Quebec aged 15 and over considered second-class citizens. However, the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms stipulates in its article 10 that " everyone has the right to the recognition and the exercise, in full equality, of the rights and freedoms of the person, without distinction, exclusion or preference based on race, color, sex, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, sexual orientation, marital status, age except as provided by law, religion, political beliefs, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, disability or the use of a means to palliate this disability. ". Failure to comply with this article takes away the right to dignity and well-being of persons with disabilities.

## **People with disabilities forgotten 364 days a year**

People with disabilities have been hard hit since the start of the pandemic. Also, the priority for people with disabilities, which was there several years ago in Quebec, has been relegated to the bottom of the pile of all priorities. These forgotten lead to perpetual confinement for some and a potential increase in institutionalization. They don't deserve to "go inside" because the government is not in prevention mode. Unfortunately, many other priorities have overtaken the issue of persons with disabilities in Quebec in recent years to the detriment of their dignity and well-being.

## **The fragmented file of people with disabilities**

In recent months, COPHAN has sent numerous requests for meetings with senior political leaders of the Quebec government. The answers obtained so far have been quite mixed, being limited to contacts with political staff from the various ministerial offices after multiple reminders. Politics should open its doors, we think first, to groups like people with disabilities promoting their inclusion, rather than to the financial wolves and corporate groups that only widen the wealth gap to their advantage by ignoring the dignity and well being of people with disabilities.

In Canada, there is the Ministry of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion. In France, there is the Ministry of Solidarity, Autonomy and People with Disabilities. In Quebec, the file is fragmented between many departments without real interdepartmental coordination.

Let us mention the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Community Action, that of social services, those of seniors and health which cover home support, accommodation, technical aids, etc. There are also the ministries of labor (employment integration), transport and sustainable mobility (adapted transport), education (school integration), etc. There is also the Office for People with Disabilities of Quebec (OPHQ) under the direction of the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MSSS) and numerous committees attached to various organizations and ministries.

In Quebec, therefore, there is a great deal of integration and coordination work to be done for the inclusion of people with disabilities.

## **COPHAN's priority files**

**Universal accessibility** is a major Canadian priority and some provinces are moving in this direction with more determination than Quebec. The delay and gaps in universal accessibility directly affect the dignity, well-being, physical and mental health of people with disabilities who are not granted equal opportunities to participate in society or who find themselves sometimes in a situation of almost perpetual confinement.

**Paratransit** suffers from a crying lack of political attention and funding, in addition to suffering the perverse effects of Bill 17 (taxi), especially in the regions of Quebec. For COPHAN, there is a need for the parameters of this program to be reviewed in order to ensure the supply of services, such as car conversion costs for example. This is an important issue of inclusion, safety, dignity and well-being of people with disabilities: without transport, it is difficult to access health services, education, work and Hobbies.

**The cost of living and the impoverishment of people with disabilities are of vital importance.** Incomes were timidly indexed compared to other groups. The principle of compensation for additional costs related to functional limitations is fundamental. COPHAN is of the opinion that the passage of Bill C22, without amendment, is necessary. Quebec's precedent with the Basic Income Program (BRP) should make it possible to quickly implement the Canadian Disability Benefit (PCPH). It should complement the PRB and enhance existing programs in Quebec and if applicable, meet needs that still remain unanswered for the dignity and well-being of people with disabilities. It is important to ensure that the province does not take advantage of the Canadian benefit to cut social programs or reallocate resources to other missions.

**Home support (SAD) and quality of accommodation services are expected.** People with disabilities generally do not want to live in a long-term care center (CHSLD). They want to live as much as possible at home. However, Canada is lagging behind in this area and Quebec is at the back of the pack in home support among the Canadian provinces. Inclusive people want to contribute to society without experiencing institutionalization. The SAD is therefore an essential tool in this context, access to which is strongly desired with less bureaucratic hassle for the dignity and well-being of people with disabilities. The State must make it efficient, because a minority of the budget goes to direct services in the field. In the same perspective, an upward revision of the parameters of home adaptation was requested, because the amounts allocated are difficult to access and, in addition to being insufficient, date from 1992 and take little account of the marked increase construction costs.

### **Together for inclusion**

The Confederation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities in Quebec (COPHAN), nonprofit organization incorporated in 1985, whose mission is to make Quebec inclusive in order to ensure the full and complete social participation of people with functional limitations and their families. Its board of directors is mainly made up of people with disabilities. It brings together more than 40 national and regional organizations and groups of people with all types of functional limitations.