



MOTION CONDEMNING THE QUEBEC PANDEMIC RESPONSE'S DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT ON UNHOUSED INDIVIDUALS 2021-01-28

Submitted for: 2021-01-28

Submitted to: SSMU Legislative Council **Document no.:** LEG-PUB-MOT-2021-01-28-003

Moved by: Noah Merali
Services Representative **Current Status:** FOR APPROVAL
 APPROVED
 POSTPONED
 COMMITTED
 NOT APPROVED

Seconded by: Ayo Ogunremi
Vice-President (External Affairs)

Issue This motion seeks to condemn the lack of action taken by the provincial government to support unhoused individuals and reaffirm the responsibility that the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) has to support unhoused members of our community.

Background and Rationale On January 9th 2021, Quebec was placed under a curfew in an attempt to reduce community transmission of COVID-19. The government stated that anyone found outside their place of residence between 8pm and 5am could face a minimum fine of \$1000. The government also published a list of acceptable reasons to break curfew such as emergency medical needs or walking a dog.¹ However, the government has notably refused to exempt unhoused individuals with Premier Legault stating that doing so would encourage others to break curfew and claim they are also unhoused. He also stated that he trusted police officers not to ticket unhoused individuals despite reports that they have.²

¹ <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/confinement-in-quebec/#c81010>

² <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/after-man-s-death-quebec-premier-says-no-to-curfew-exception-claiming-others-would-pose-as-homeless-1.5272986>



Premier Legault has stated that police officers are supposed to direct unhoused individuals to shelters however those shelters have also been impacted by the curfew. The Open Door in Milton-Parc was forced to close overnight and this directly led to the death of Raphael Andre, an Innu man who regularly visited the shelter. As a result, Montreal Mayor Valerie Plante called upon the provincial government to exempt unhoused individuals from the curfew but the Premier refused.

Ultimately, a judge from the Quebec Superior Court ruled that unhoused individuals must be exempt from the curfew, however, the curfew is only one example of how the province's pandemic response has ignored the needs of unhoused individuals. Reduced capacities at shelters have made this winter especially tough for anyone experiencing homelessness.

Alignment with Mission

In keeping with the SSMU's position that having a roof over one's head is not a privilege and in keeping with the society's value of leadership, it is important that the SSMU stands with unhoused members of our community against the lack of empathy or care shown to them by our provincial government.

Consultations Completed

Consulted with SSMU Vice-President (External Affairs) and members of the Affordable Student Housing Committee.

Risk Factors and Resource Implications

A statement simply condemning the pandemic response in general could be perceived as opposing COVID-19 regulations and so it is important that the statement and any other action taken acknowledges the potential benefits of the lockdown (though none have been confirmed yet) and the importance of individual sacrifice in the name of public health. Additionally, coming out in support of the unhoused members of our community would send a strong message of solidarity.

Sustainability Considerations

This motion is deeply rooted in a concern for social sustainability. As outlined in section 3.2. of the Sustainability Policy, social sustainability requires the SSMU to endeavour to minimize systemic power imbalances within society and foster a culture of anti-oppression. These considerations are at the heart of this motion, which seeks to acknowledge and take action on the systemic disempowerment of unhoused people.



Impact of Decision and Next Steps

If passed, the Executive Committee would be mandated to issue an official statement condemning the province's temporary solutions to problems faced by unhoused individuals and their clear lack of concern for the wellbeing of those experiencing homelessness. Further, the office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) would be mandated to reach out to existing campaigns and explore ways the SSMU can support them.

If not passed, the SSMU could appear to be unaware of the struggle faced by unhoused people when it comes to the pandemic. Additionally, not all members of the SSMU would be aware of this problem and what the SSMU is doing to stand in solidarity with members of the community.

Motion or Resolution for Approval

Be It Resolved, that the Legislative Council condemn the pandemic response imposed by the Government of Quebec for its impact on marginalised communities, especially unhoused people and migrant workers';

Be It Resolved, that the Legislative Council condemn the applicability of the Government of Quebec's pandemic response towards marginalized communities, in particular, unhoused people and migrant workers;

Be It Further Resolved, that the Executive Committee be mandated to issue a communication articulating the SSMU's condemnation of the provincial pandemic response for its lack of empathy for unhoused and migrant populations;

Be It Further Resolved, that the office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) be mandated to support and assist existing campaigns that align with the SSMU's position on the provincial pandemic response;

Be It Further Resolved, that the Legislative Council support the ruling of the Honorable Chantal Masse of the Superior Court of Quebec to suspend the curfew's application to unhoused people; and

Be It Lastly Resolved, that the SSMU Executive Committee be mandated to issue a communication articulating the SSMU's condemnation of the applicability of the Government of Quebec's pandemic response towards marginalized communities, in particular unhoused people and migrant workers.



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**Results of the
Vote**

In favour	(26)
Opposed	(0)
Abstain	(2)

APPROVED