



Status update: COVID\_19  
Version 2 \_ Produced on March 22, 2020

## CONTEXT

The NETWORK is focused on addressing the safety and wellbeing of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit in Montreal. Indigenous people living in homelessness are in the most precarious position at the moment due to their lack of access to private shelter (for isolation or social distancing) and proper sanitation (washing, changing clothing, etc.). As such, we are in very regular contact with the operating Indigenous-serving organizations on the front line in Montreal, including: **Resilience Montreal**, **Projets Autochtones du Québec** (PAQ), **Open Door**, **Native Women's Shelter of Montreal** (NWSM), **Chez Doris**, and the **Indigenous Support Workers Project** (ASWP, via Exeko). Needs and realities are changing rapidly.

We recognize that public authorities are working around the clock to get in front of the spread of this virus. **Thank you for your commitment and dedication** to improving the situation for the Indigenous community in Montreal, including these steps that have been taken so far:

- the installation of the first municipally-run washing stations on March 20, 2020
- the steps that are being taken to isolate people living close to the street who are diagnosed or waiting for results (old Royal Victoria site)
- The announcement of \$157.5 million in Federal Funding across Canada through the Reaching Home Program along with up to \$50 million to women's shelters and sexual assault centres (both of which Montreal will benefit from)

## INADEQUATE RESPONSE TIME

We are increasingly concerned that the necessary measures to reduce harm have not yet been taken nor are being planned for the Indigenous population living on the street in Montreal, unlike many other cities in North America who are adapting much faster.

Municipal and provincial authorities announced on Friday, March 20th that a facility is being developed at the old Royal Victoria site to isolate people living in homelessness who will be diagnosed for COVID-19 (or waiting for results). This site is estimated to open **2 weeks after the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a controllable pandemic** and after both the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada and Premier Legault asked citizens to start practicing self-isolation and/or social distancing.

The upcoming facility at the old Royal Victoria will address risks of spreading the virus from persons living in homelessness to *other members* of society, however **adequate preventative measures were not taken to alleviate the contraction of the virus for this at-risk population preemptively:**

- Inadequate information has been shared regarding steps being taken to create shelter options for homeless persons who want to isolate/social distance to protect themselves *before* they contract the virus. Is this being planned?
- Though eventual funding has been announced for shelter/centres, organizations are not seeing this funding yet. When should they expect it?
- Inadequate information from health authorities regarding the appropriate steps that shelters/centres should be taking.
- No protection or cleaning supplies whatsoever have been provided to the aforementioned shelters/centres by any governmental body.

**The speed of the delivery of these actions is crucial to controlling the spread of this virus to the most vulnerable members of the Indigenous community in Montreal: those without homes.**

## PRIORITY NEEDS

In order to get ahead of the spread and preventing this population from contracting the virus, federal, provincial, and municipal authorities are being called to immediate action to **immediately implement the following priority infrastructure need:**

1. ADAPTED SHELTER must be created in order to isolate people who present symptoms and those wishing to practice social distancing or voluntary-isolation; currently, **those living in homelessness do not have the option to practice social distancing or voluntary isolation.**

In addition, while workload has increased rapidly, shelter/centres are losing staff at an alarming rate due to a number factors. Federal, provincial, and municipal authorities are being called to **immediate action to make the following available:**

2. VIRUS DETECTION on the street and in shelters/centres to people living in homelessness, workers, and volunteers. Workers are now starting to show symptoms and don't know where to get tested; there are workers that could return to the front-line if they were tested and confirmed as negative.
3. SUPPLIES in each shelter/centre, and each worker and volunteer must be educated on procedures for use.
  - Protective products: **Sanitizers**, masks (N95 or higher), gloves, strong hand soap
  - Cleaning products: Surface disinfectants, wipe

4. SKILLED WORKERS in order to keep shelters/centres operating (recruitment and funding required)
5. INFORMATION regarding:
  - Appropriate health and safety steps that should be undertaken in shelter/centres to reduce the spread of the virus.
  - Upcoming measures being planned by authorities: this will allow front-line workers to redirect their energy to other areas, increasing collective efficiency.

*Note: Testing is currently unavailable to nonprofit front-line service workers. Help us detect and avoid the spread of the virus to the workers who we depend upon to keep services up and running for the homeless community.*

## REDUCING FINANCIAL BURDEN

The pandemic situation has led organizations to temporarily suspend activities and/or dramatically change them to properly adapt to the new reality. In addition, nonprofit organizations depend heavily on completing year-end deliverables and expenses during the last weeks of March. **Funders at all levels are called upon to release statements to confirm:**

6. That front-line organizations will be reimbursed for all of their COVID-19-response related expenses.
7. That nonprofit organizations will not lose funding if they had to temporarily suspend or change activities to adapt to emergent needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
8. That nonprofit organizations will be permitted to carry over any and all 2019-2020 surpluses to resume activities after this crisis is over.

## EMERGENCY MEASURES TAKEN BY THE NETWORK

- Regular communications with community organizations serving Indigenous people living in homelessness and working towards resolving their needs as they emerge.
- Redirecting the general public to this ["COVID-19 Response" webpage](#) and managing the messages coming into this new [designated email](#): information, volunteering opportunities, donating goods and money.
- Ordering any protection and cleaning supplies that we can find on the market, which is **not enough**. Note that the NETWORK does not have a budget for any of these purchases.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Please let us know as soon as you are able to confirm relief on any of the points 1-8.

Organizations' needs are constantly in flux with the availability of volunteers and supplies changing drastically from moment to moment. As such, please get in touch with us directly if you need specific or additional information:

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