



**L'R** des centres  
de femmes  
du Québec

## A Statement from Québec Women's Centres in Favour of a Feminist post-COVID Recovery<sup>1</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone around the world since last spring. However, the crisis has not affected us all equally. Over the past few months, the inequality gap has grown wider and wider.

Those experiencing poverty, those who have been racialized, the elderly, and women have all been hit disproportionately.

The pandemic's impact on the living conditions of Black (im)migrant women is a particularly **stark** example. That being so, we feel it is essential to put feminist issues at the centre of post-COVID economic recovery efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> Inspired from <https://justrecoveryforall.ca/>



## Whereas the health and well-being of women have been undermined ;

- Women are at the head of half of all rental households, and women see themselves missing an average of \$6,078 per year compared to men living in similar situations<sup>2</sup> ;
- The situation is also critical for those receiving welfare. A \$690 monthly cheque, the closure of many support resources, the federal government's refusal to grant them the monthly \$2,000 allocation, the increase in the price of a basket of goods, as well as various new pandemic-related costs have all made women's living conditions even more difficult ;
- For several years now, the housing crisis has swelled, a situation that the pandemic has raised to an unsustainable level. The exorbitant price of housing is a major obstacle for women facing domestic violence and is also contributing to an increase in what's known as hidden homelessness ;
- Public services and the justice system are not merely inaccessible, but constitute a risk for women, particularly those who have been racialized. The death of Joyce Echaquan is one tragic example. Our institutions are marked by the heteropatriarchy, systemic racism, ableism, and many other systems of oppression and these all constitute barriers to women's health ;
- Instances of violence against women and against those who have been racialized reached a record high during the pandemic. Last year, due to lack of space, women's shelters had to turn away 15,000 women facing domestic violence. Pandemic-related health restrictions have now further restricted the number of available places. The past summer's second wave of women coming out with their #MeToo stories underlines the urgent need to adopt measures to eradicate violence against women.

## Whereas women in the workforce and their communities are being stretched to their limits ;

- In Québec, women represent 90% of nurses, 88% of orderlies and nursing assistants, 84% of teaching professionals, and 80% of workers in community organizations. According to Statistics Canada, 26% of healthcare personnel are immigrants<sup>3</sup>. These are jobs that put workers on the front lines and increase their risk of contracting COVID-19, making them more likely to suffer burnout from being overworked, underpaid and subject to unsuitable working conditions ;
- Women, particularly those who have been racialized, are also overrepresented in many fields that have been severely hit by the crisis, such as the hotel, restaurant, retail, and personal care industries. More women than men have lost their jobs due to the pandemic<sup>4, 5</sup> ;

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2 Statistics from the Regroupement des groupes de femmes de la région de la Capitale-Nationale

3 <https://csf.gouv.qc.ca/article/publicationsnum/les-femmes-et-la-pandemie/societe/femmes-autochtones-immigrantes-ou-racisees-dans-loeil-de-la-pandemie/>

4 <https://lactualite.com/societe/une-crise-genree-exige-une-reponse-genree/?fbclid=IwAR3ITMmShjACZHtaD8ySvzyqvjUE4MnDdd2m5LEzUnTy0OcOzDYCR60bbmo>

5 <https://csf.gouv.qc.ca/article/publicationsnum/les-femmes-et-la-pandemie/societe/femmes-autochtones-immigrantes-ou-racisees-dans-loeil-de-la-pandemie/>

- The pandemic also increased the weight of invisible labour and the mental load borne by women (homeschooling, meal preparation, housework, disinfection, etc.).<sup>6</sup>

### **Whereas the living conditions of women are deteriorating;**

- The proportion of households experiencing food insecurity is more than twice as high in single-parent households compared to two-parent households. Single-parent households where the parent is a woman are the most likely to experience food insecurity (25.1%)<sup>7</sup> ;
- The social determinants of health and well-being of people have been neglected for decades in the interests of neoliberalism ;
- Per hour, women earn an average of \$2.55 less than men, despite Québec's Pay Equity Act<sup>8</sup>. Women who have been racialized earn 55.6 cents for each dollar earned by men who are not racialized<sup>9</sup> ;
- If we are to overcome to climate crisis, the pandemic has shown us the need to build resilient communities able to listen to women's needs.

### **Whereas inequality is rising and the divide between different communities is getting wider;**

- We see that gender inequality is growing due to the pandemic, as are inequalities between different groups of women<sup>10</sup> ;
- Measures put in place to respond to the pandemic flow from a divisive approach and we are seeing a clear increase in anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism.
- The digital divide has grown during the health crisis, highlighting the fundamental right to accessible information technology.

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6 <https://www.rcinet.ca/fr/2020/08/07/covid-19-quebec-le-travail-des-femmes-na-pas-ete-suffisamment-reconnu/?fbclid=IwAR3lTMmShjACZHtaD8ySvzyqvjUE4MnDdd2m5LEzUnTy0OcOzDYCR60bbmo>

7 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-625-x/2020001/article/00001-fra.htm>

8 Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté, Femmes et pauvreté <https://www.pauvrete.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/femmespauvrete.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2zjd5cU73zyaqx6JlupdDtwcdci9zhOMJ8j7ECaMJpC3squqir9D5vmf8>

9 <https://cupe.ca/closing-wage-gap-pay-equity>

10 <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1726407/femmes-noires-sante-travail-afro-canadien-quebec-statistiques-canada>



## Demands\*

The Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) approach must be folded into all post-COVID economic recovery plans. A **feminist** post-COVID recovery plan must :

### 1 Prioritize the health and well-being of women :

- 1.1 Invest in the social safety net by funding public and parapublic services<sup>11</sup> ;
- 1.2 Make institutional health services, social services and justice services safe and accessible for women.

### 2 Put women workers and their communities first :

- 2.1 Invest in healthcare, education and the community sector by raising the importance of women's working conditions in these areas ;
- 2.2 Fully recognize the value of the work performed by women particularly those who have been racialized; they are not angels but skilled workers with specific competencies ;
- 2.3 Immediately raise the minimum hourly wage to \$15 and ensure that everyone earns enough to meet their basic needs.

### 3 Build resilience to prevent future crises and their social fallout:

- 3.1 Increase global mission funding for women's centres in Québec as well as for other autonomous community action organizations ;
- 3.2 Implement an environmental transition plan in collaboration with Indigenous groups that supports social justice<sup>12</sup> ;
- 3.3 Ensure that women and all relevant stakeholders are equitably represented in all crisis-related decision-making ;
- 3.4 Invest massively in social housing<sup>13</sup>.

### 4 Strengthen solidarity and equity between communities :

- 4.1 Implement a guaranteed minimum income program without cutting into the social safety net ;
- 4.2 Immediately grant permanent residency to migrant women, non-status women, and women who are temporary and domestic workers, as well as to their families ;
- 4.3 Apply all measures recommended by the three recent inquiries on relations between Indigenous peoples and public services, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and **genuine reconciliation** ;
- 4.4 Nationalize high-speed Internet access and deploy it across the entire province of Québec at a price that everyone can afford ;
- 4.5 Incorporate notions of gender equality as well as equality between women within all teaching materials used in Québec's education system.



These demands are interrelated and cannot be split off from one another.

11 <https://www.nonauxhausses.org/lancement10milliards/>

12 <https://www.pourlatransitionenergetique.org/feuille-de-route-quebec-zen/>

13 [https://www.frapru.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020j109-Memoire\\_ConsultationCoPermaFinances\\_Fed\\_Final.pdf](https://www.frapru.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020j109-Memoire_ConsultationCoPermaFinances_Fed_Final.pdf)