



Table de concertation des groupes de femmes

GASPÉSIE · ÎLES-DE-LA-MADELEINE

Sick of Being Despised: Feminist Social Strike

Gaspe, April 24th—From April 29 to May 3, the Table de concertation des groupes de femmes de la Gaspésie et des Îles-de-la-Madeleine is taking part in a week of social strike and actions. This social strike is a protest movement in which a hundred community organizations across Québec come together to oppose government decisions that we deem contrary to our interests and rights. We are sick of being despised by policies that undermine the common good!

We therefore join forces to make demands. Our demands, which aim to combat poverty and social exclusion from an intersectional feminist perspective, are the following: the end of state violence against women, the end of migration status-based discrimination, the access to an income to get out of poverty, the right to housing for everyone, and well funded, accessible and free public services for all. These demands respond to urgent needs and social rights that are being sidelined by governments.

For instance, we see state violence on a daily basis, and we are mobilizing to eliminate it. Nastassia Williams says: “One example of state violence that we’re seeing more and more in our region is when immigrant women and pregnant people without status or with precarious status can’t access free reproductive health services. It goes against fundamental human rights, and it’s violent. All people should have access to free quality healthcare services, regardless of their migratory status.

Nobody should live in poverty in a wealthy country like Canada who could easily eradicate poverty among its population. Yet, women are more likely than men to live in poverty, especially those over 65 years old. We have the third-highest rate of welfare beneficiaries. In our region, where seasonal industries employ many people, the most frequent reason for applying for welfare is the end of employment insurance benefits. There are many seasonal workers who will end their working season, receive employment insurance benefits, then social assistance and then return to work. We know that fewer women than men qualify for EI benefits, and when they do qualify, they receive lower benefits. This is mainly due to the fact that more women hold part-time jobs, and traditionally female occupations are less paid. There are also fewer women on welfare, mainly because they are in relationships with men who have an income. Let’s not forget that in 2024, a single person with no employment constraints who receives social assistance is entitled to \$9,684 per year, or \$807 per month. It covers only 25% of the income needed to lift oneself out of poverty, and that the income needed to lift oneself out of poverty is higher in our region than in major urban centres.

Moreover, our region is currently experiencing a housing crisis, which is hitting women particularly hard. There are growing obstacles to accessing safe, healthy, and affordable housing. Some of our towns, such as Gaspé, Carleton-sur-Mer and the agglomeration of the Magdalen Islands, have had inoccupancy rates near 0% for several years now. In the meantime, the government’s investments in social housing are far from meeting the needs. This situation creates a perfect storm where women in an abusive relationship have very few options to escape. The scarcity of available housing also drives the rents up, and since we know that women still earn less than men and are more often single mothers, finding a place to stay is a real assault course.

Finally, it is with great concern that we look at the ransacking of the social safety net, and at the weakening and slow privatization of our public services. We think that the government has a responsibility to offer well funded, accessible and free public services for all, especially for the most vulnerable. And by accessible, we mean that the English-speaking population of the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands should have true access to those services in their mother tongue.

The program

As part of this strike, mobilization activities have been organized at several locations across the territory:

Monday, April 29: Sick of being violated by the state: Feminist strike!

Our collaborator Valérie Allard presented the results of her collection of testimonials on obstetrical and gynecological violence (OGV) in Gaspésie and on the Magdalen Islands at 1:30 p.m. at the [Maison de la Famille Parenfant](#) in Gaspé.

Wednesday, May 1: Access to an income to get out of poverty

For International Workers' Day, the Table de concertation des groupes de femmes de la Gaspésie et des Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Droits devant and the Collectif Gaspésie-Les-Îles pour un Québec sans pauvreté joined forces with the APTS-Gaspésie and the Conseil central GÎM de la CSN to demand an income that lifts everyone out of poverty. A free kitchen soup was organized at the traffic circle in New Richmond and leaflets were distributed.

Thursday, May 2: The right to housing for everyone

The Table de concertation des groupes de femmes de la Gaspésie et des Îles-de-la-Madeleine and other community groups will be at Place du Havre in Chandler. During lunchtime, we'll be distributing leaflets on the impact of the housing crisis on women.

About

The [Table de concertation des groupes de femmes de la Gaspésie et des Îles-de-la-Madeleine](#) (Gaspésie-Magdalen Islands women's groups round table) takes action to collectively defend women's rights through popular education, mobilisation and representation activities. It acts politically, without partisanship, to ensure that the rights and interests of women in our region are respected in diverse areas such as health, education and the region's social and economic development.

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Information and interview requests:

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