



May 23rd, 2023

JOINT DECLARATION

REACTION TO THE UNACCEPTABLE AND DISGRACEFUL COMMENTS MADE BY MNA PIERRE DUFOUR

The homelessness situation in Val-d'Or, with its complexity and Indigenous particularity, combined with the feeling of insecurity expressed by the citizens of the downtown area, made the municipality fall back into a tense social climate that polarizes and rekindled divisions within the population. It is clear that healing and reconciliation, since the events of 2015, are still far from being achieved.

During the public meeting of the Val-d'Or City Council on May 15, Pierre Dufour, MNA for Abitibi-Est, made unacceptable and disgraceful comments that are unworthy of a government representative. As an elected official, Mr. Dufour has failed in his duty. His position as a MNA confers on him an influence over the citizens; his comments, instead of contributing to the solution of a major societal problem, are detrimental to social peace, to initiatives of reconciliation between peoples and collaborative efforts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations organisations and institutions working in the field.

At a time when public speaking is encouraged and confidence in the justice system is a top government priority, the MNA's oratory rants discredit the testimony of courageous victims. He is reopening wounds that have barely healed among Indigenous women and the general public alike. His comments encourage a radicalisation of discourse that opens the door to the expression of systemic racism and discrimination. Mr. Dufour's words clearly run counter to efforts at reconciliation, reparation and recognition, and move us further away from an egalitarian and inclusive society that reflects today's Quebec.

Such comments also undermine the democratic process of the Viens Commission on relations between Indigenous people and certain public services in Quebec. The recommendations of this Commission, which was set up by the Quebec government following denunciations of abuses experienced by Indigenous women at the hands of Val-d'Or police officers, open the door to a new dialogue and to responsible and positive commitments. In October 2019, when publicly apologizing to First Nations and Inuit for the harm caused, Premier François Legault stressed that "The findings made by the Commissioner are damning, the Quebec state is not doing enough and this situation is unworthy of Quebec society."

With this joint declaration, the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre and its allies express their disavowal. It is by standing in solidarity and working together to build social justice that we contribute today to maintaining a dignified Quebec and prepare a better future for future generations.



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