

Press release

For immediate release

Punitive welfare law contested in court!

Montréal, Monday, December 2nd, 2019— This morning, about a hundred people rallied in front of the *Tribunal administratif du Québec* (TAQ) to support the two plaintiffs contesting a punitive welfare measure. Since May 2015, welfare recipients who leave Québec for more than 7 consecutive days (or 15 cumulative days) in a calendar month are no longer eligible for welfare. This residency criteria is the most restrictive among all the social programs in Quebec and among the welfare programs in Canada.

Arié Moyal, one of the plaintiffs in the legal challenge explains why he embarked on this process: “this regulation is deeply harmful to me and represents a great deal of contempt for the rights of Quebeckers. This should be alarming to all of us—this measure is discriminatory and should be abolished!”

The protesters in this morning’s rally condemned this law for punishing a group of people who are already vulnerable. With \$669/month for a single person, the welfare cheque is not enough to cover basic needs. Each cut forces welfare recipients to make impossible choices, like taking the bus to go to the doctor or eating.

“This law has a devastating impact on people’s lives. We regularly meet people who must make the harrowing choice between visiting their dying mother for the last time or waiting for her funeral before visiting. We have also met people who ended up on the street after coming back from their trip.” explains Sheetal Pathak, community organizer at Project Genesis, an organization from Côte-des-Neiges that will be participating in the legal challenge as an intervenor.

During the hearing, the plaintiffs and their lawyers will argue that this law violates the rights and freedoms guaranteed in our Charters. For example, this measure disproportionately affects immigrants. Although people born outside Canada represent only 18% of welfare recipients, they make up 81% of those who had their cheque cut because of this measure.

“The government is taking liberties with our human rights. We hope that justice will be served in this court.” Arié Moyal.

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Arié Moyal will also be available for interviews.