

PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATIONS: A NEW VOICE IN THE PUBLIC DEBATE ?

The Call of Nine Quebec-Based Foundations Against the Impact of Provincial Austerity Budget on Social Inequalities

S. Lefèvre (UQAM), A. Berthiaume (McGill)

Montreal Research Laboratory on Canadian Philanthropy (MRLCP)

June 1st, 2016. ANSER/ARES. UCalgary



“Let’s Not Lose Sight of the Impact of the Reforms on Social Inequality”

LE DEVOIR

LIBRE DE PENSER

DE GRANDES FONDATIONS PRIVÉES INQUIÈTES

Les risques de la rigueur budgétaire

Nous sommes préoccupées par l’accroissement des inégalités sociales, un phénomène qui suscite des appels à la vigilance de la part des organisations économiques les plus crédibles

11 mars 2015 | Texte collectif* - Les signataires sont les dirigeants de fondations privées. | Québec

Pour la première fois, des fondations québécoises prennent ensemble la parole pour exprimer leurs préoccupations et témoigner de l’inquiétude ressentie par les personnes, les familles et les communautés qu’elles appuient. Au moment où plusieurs programmes gouvernementaux sont remis en question et où la fiscalité fait l’objet d’un examen en profondeur, nous nous interrogeons sur les impacts possibles de ces changements sur la société.

From March 10th, 2015, Le Devoir

An unexpected mobilization?

- A **public** release (vs. discrete)
- A **collective** voice (vs. singular for each foundation)
- An address towards the **government** (vs. political neutrality and safe distance)
- Choice of **inequality** as a theme (vs. poverty)

How ? (*M.O.*)

- Béati and FLAC's **leadership**
- **Expertise** of a third party (INM)
- Legitimacy of the **available argumentation** on collective cost of social inequalities
- Different **possibilities** of implication
- Choice of the **tone** of the letter
- **Division** of labor (writting, funding, reach-out, spokesperson)

Why ? : Is there an **existential crisis** in the philanthropic sector ?

- Questions on their **resources** (stagnation since 2008 economic crisis)
- Increasing **needs** in communities (various budget cuts)
- **Complex relations** with the State (incentives but no clear recognition)
- Debates on the legitimacy and constraints within the **action perimeter** (CRA, bill 56)
- « Innovation » rhetoric : What is to do **when the State withdraws** ... without replacing it ?

The results

- **Poor:** **Response** from the government on the question of inequalities
- **Fair:** Construction of **legitimacy** in public space and in relations with **fundees** (community groups)
- **Strong:** Consolidation of relations and exchange of reflexions **between** and **in** foundations on their political role in public debate

The next challenges

- **Heterogeneity** of the collective : size, orientations and views, relations with the State
- **Shape of collective**: degree of formalization, cost of mobilization (time and \$)
- **Modalities of action**: frequency of intervention ? Who speaks ?
- Fear of **politicization** (RCA)