



PRESS RELEASE

APQ campaign to protect reserved parking for persons with disabilities: An appeal for civic-mindedness

Montréal, September 26, 2009 – The Association des paraplégiques du Québec (APQ) today launched an urgent appeal for civic-mindedness in the form of a campaign to raise awareness of the importance of respecting parking spaces reserved for persons with disabilities.

The six-month campaign will include several grassroots actions designed to inform the public of the purpose of these parking spaces and related issues. Education resources will be distributed throughout the province. These will include posters (24” x 18”) showing an empty wheelchair with the shock slogan “If you really want to take their place, feel free.” This image also appears on flyers with an explanation of the purpose of reserved parking on the back. These flyers are generally used as grassroots education resources and may be distributed by hand or placed under the windshield wipers of offending cars (like parking tickets) to serve as warnings.

For Walter Zelaya, the organization’s CEO, “it’s important to understand that without these reserved parking spaces – which are already extremely limited in number – many people can’t carry out their everyday activities. With the arrival of fall and the approach of winter, even more challenging for people who have trouble getting around because of the snow, the APQ appeals to the common decency of our fellow citizens!” Nicolas Messier, the APQ’s senior advisor, integration, adds that “respecting reserved parking spaces means much more than just avoiding tickets – it means promoting the social inclusion of disabled persons. Too many people still think it’s acceptable to illegally occupy parking spaces reserved for disabled persons. This lack of civic-mindedness causes real harm to all disabled persons in the province.”

Through this campaign, organized in collaboration with partner associations and institutions established in various Quebec regions, the APQ aims to remind the public that reserved parking spaces are not a privilege but an essential facility enabling disabled persons to participate actively in various aspects of social and economic life.

“Almost thirty years after the United Nations proclaimed 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons, it’s still not unusual for disabled persons to be unable to do their grocery shopping because others have parked illegally in the only reserved spaces allowing them to exit their vehicles. Under these conditions, how can they hope to live active and productive lives? If people would only remember that they, too, might one day really need to use those spaces, they would understand why it’s important to respect them,” declared Mr. Messier, himself a quadriplegic relying on a wheelchair to get around who uses the spaces.

Finally, in addressing this problem, there are many social issues to be considered, including the aging of the population. The APQ has taken numerous steps at the municipal and provincial levels to make elected representatives aware of the challenges faced by the growing number of rightful users of these reserved spaces.

To receive free campaign promotional literature, contact the APQ at 514-341-7272 (Montréal) or 1-800-341-7272 (outside Montréal).

- 30 -

Information:

Nicolas Messier. Cell: (514)885-8479
Walter Zelaya. Cell: (514) 779 8283

Éric Gilbert (418) 208 4976