

NEW MEMBER PACKET

What is ACT UP Montréal?

Welcome to ACT UP Montréal. Your presence, input and energy are the strength of this organization. ACT UP Montréal is a diverse, non-partisan group of individuals united in anger and compassion and committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis. We research and distribute the latest medical information. We meet with government and public health officials. We protest and demonstrate. We refuse to remain silent about the scope and severity of an epidemic which represents both a tragedy for those directly affected and a major social, medical, legal and political challenge for the societies we live in as Quebecers and Canadians.

Why the name "ACT UP Montréal"?

You may have asked yourself what ACT UP stands for, and why a group active in Quebec, where the majority of people are French-speaking, has chosen a partly-English name?

ACT UP is the abbreviation of «AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power» (which we render rather approximately in French as «Coalition de lutte contre le sida»). Of course, it also means that we "act up". This is not because we're a bunch of poorly-bred ruffians who like to make a lot of noise and be offensive. In fact, we are quite conscious of the responsibilities we are assuming and of the need to act seriously and professionally, to work in close cooperation with other groups and agencies, (even official ones) and to convey a message that is clear and easily understood in all of our actions. At the same time, we are acutely conscious of the inadequacy of our health care and research structures, people's attitudes and our legal systems in the face of the serious and pressing realities of the AIDS crisis. If we want the many necessary changes to occur, politely proposing solutions is not always enough. Sometimes, we have to make a racket and say things that the people who have a vested interest in the status quo don't want to hear.

In other words, the name ACT UP Montréal (always used in full to identify us with our roots here in Montreal) reflects what we see as a necessary and appropriate philosophy and style of intervention. By understanding and dealing with political dimensions of AIDS, we fill a void that other AIDS-related service organizations cannot.

That's not all, however. We make no secret of our association with the international ACT UP movement, which now has chapters in over sixty cities around the world, including New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, London and Paris. We are not directly affiliated, but we do have a shared philosophy and attempt to be mutually supportive. So ACT UP Montréal is a fully autonomous that benefits from the experience and support of other ACT UP groups. AIDS doesn't stop at any countries borders. In order to be effective, the fight against AIDS has to be international too.

In the U.S., the country the hardest hit by AIDS, ACT UP has applying enough pressure and developing enough credibility to have direct influence

on the policies of the Food and Drug Administration, particularly on issues such as speeded-up trials for promising treatments and access to experimental drugs parallel to the trials for those who desperately need some form of treatment. Some of the ideas of our American co-fighters can be adapted to the situation here in Quebec and Canada (one major difference between the U.S. and Canada is our generalized medicare system). And we fully intend to work with other groups here and elsewhere in Canada (Toronto's Aids Action Now Toronto and the Vancouver PWA Coalition, for example) to come up with original solutions.

Finally, we've already said that AIDS raises issues that go beyond the borders of any one country. Whether the issue be the U.S. Immigration Department's retrograde policy of barring HIV-positive people from entry, which has already triggered a boycott of the Vth International AIDS Conference in San Francisco in June 1990 by traditionally non-radical agencies like the World Health Organization and the International Red Cross, or cases of trials being blocked because of a problem in another country, the international network of ACT UP groups is a response to a real need.

ACT UP Montréal's Language Policy

Shortly after forming in October 1989, ACT UP Montréal discussed the use of French and English and adopted a policy aimed at making the group effective and functional in the linguistic context of Montreal and Quebec. Here are the most relevant passages of the resolution adopted following that discussion:

"ACT UP Montréal will use French as its primary but non exclusive "working language". It is understood that members of the group are free to express themselves in the language in which they feel the most comfortable. The meetings of the group will be led in French, with simultaneous or consecutive translation for those who need it. . . . Members who have proposals or reports to submit are requested to contact the Translation Committee or someone else who can translate them into French or English, as the case may be. . . . Minutes of meetings must be available, at the same time, in French and in English, as must all other important documents for members, to the extent that time allows. The Archives Committee must look over the documents it receives and decide which should be translated for the information of members and the Committees. . . . ACT UP Montréal is active in both the French-speaking and English-speaking communities. All its documents (press releases, leaflets, information kits . . .) should be distributed in French and English, unless a particular action is limited to one of the two major linguistic communities."



Weekly meetings and rules of order

ACT UP is committed to participatory and non-hierarchical democracy. All members have equal say in the decisions of the group. Members are encouraged to contribute to the debate on any question at group meetings.

All decisions for ACT UP are made or ratified during meetings of the group as a whole. Although other bodies (like the Coordinating Committee) have some decision-making power, no action can be taken on behalf of ACT UP without the support of fifty per cent plus one of the membership in a meeting of the whole.

The agenda at ACT UP meetings is divided into three parts: Introduction, Announcements and Motions. In the introduction, facilitators introduce the group and its mandate to new members and read the agenda. At this point, members may request that additional points be added or may suggest that the order of motions be altered.

After the introduction, members make announcements of interest to the group as a whole (i.e. a new testing programme or a benefit party for another organization). Announcements are not open to debate because they do not present a motion to be discussed. If you want to announce something that requires action by ACT UP, it is better to bring it up during the motions part of the meeting, even if you're not sure what action should be taken.

Ideas for actions or other decisions usually originate in one of the committees. There is a list of all the current committees in this package and new committees can be formed as new priorities emerge. All members are encouraged to participate in a committee.

Committees meet between the regularly scheduled meetings and bring ideas to the floor for debate by the group as a whole. Individual members who would like to suggest an action might want to discuss it with the appropriate committee before the meeting of the group as a whole. But there is no restriction on members presenting motions directly to the floor, especially if action must be taken immediately or if there is no committee responsible for the question. If you want to bring a motion to the floor, make sure it is on the agenda at the beginning of the meeting and give the motion to one of the facilitators in writing.

When a motion is presented, one of the facilitators will ask for a seconder. Once the motion is seconded, a speakers' list is opened and members are invited to speak on the question. As a general rule, comments are limited to one minute and a half to give everyone who wants it a chance to contribute within the agreed-upon time limit. In addition to arguments for and against a motion, a speaker has the option to propose an amendment or to call the question. Calling the question means closing off debate (either immediately or once the speakers' list is exhausted) to vote.

If you want to change or add to the content of the motion, you can propose an amendment. An amendment can add something to the motion or change a word or phrase in the motion. The facilitator will ask the person who

originally presented the motion if it is friendly. If it is, the amended motion replaces the original motion and becomes the subject of the debate. If it is not friendly but has a seconder, the floor will be asked to debate the amendment and a separate speakers' list is opened. When it comes to a vote on the amendment, if the amendment passes then the amended motion passes, but if the amendment fails, the debate returns to the unamended motion and the original speakers' list.

Once a motion is passed it cannot be re-introduced, overturned or amended except with a motion to reconsider. A motion to reconsider a previously passed motion can only be introduced by a person who voted for the original motion and now wants it overturned.

You may not interrupt a person who has the floor or speak when it's not your turn except for a point of order, a point of information, or a point of personal privilege. You can introduce a point of order if you think the chair is ignoring rules of procedure (i.e. not providing

French translation of English comments). A point of information is used to ask (not provide) information from the person speaking or the facilitator if you don't understand a motion or a comment. A point of personal privilege means that something is going on at the meeting that affects you directly and personally (i.e. there is too much cigarette smoke).

These rules sound restrictive and complicated on paper. But in practice, they are designed to allow the widest possible range of debate and democratic exchange. They're also a lot easier to understand when you see them in operation, really!

Who does what?

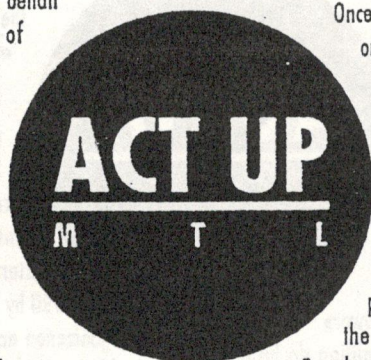
The **ADMINISTRATOR** handles organizational matters such as correspondence, phone calls and the maintenance of a phone tree, mailing lists and files of the group's basic documents. He/she plans the weekly meetings and facilitates the meetings of the Coordinating Committee, of which he/she is an elected member.

The **FACILITATORS** (2) are elected by the floor to chair the weekly meetings according to the groups rules of order. They also sit on the Coordinating Committee.

The **TREASURER** receives all funds raised by the group and handles the bank accounts and any contract negotiations. He/she is an elected member of the Coordinating Committee and makes weekly reports to the membership.

The **COORDINATING COMMITTEE** represents the general membership. It reviews policy statements and deals with procedural issues. The Coordinating Committee is made up of the above-mentioned persons and a representative of each of the following committees.

THE **ART & FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE** raises funds for the group's operation by organizing benefits, canvassing for contributions and producing and selling merchandise (posters, T-shirts, buttons ...).



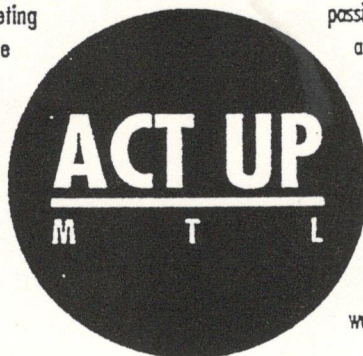
The **MEDIA & ARCHIVES COMMITTEE** develops and maintains relations with the media to publicize the group's events and positions on various issues. It monitors the press for information and issues of interest to the group or requiring action. It also maintains files of press releases and articles of interest to the group or the committees.

The **OUTREACH & TRANSLATION COMMITTEE** develops and maintains direct relations with other organization for the purpose of forming coalitions. It is also responsible for meeting ACT UP Montréal's translation needs in accordance with the group's language policy.

The **TREATMENT & DATA COMMITTEE** gathers and disseminates information on the latest treatments, informs members on important issues requiring a response from ACT UP and cooperates closely with other groups to propose new models for trials and access to drugs.

Ad Hoc Committees

AD HOC COMMITTEES may be struck by the floor to carry out a particular activity (a "zap", for example). All proposals to set up an ad hoc committee must mention an end date, when the committee's mandate is up and the committee ceases have a representative on the Coordinating Committee.



ACTIONS

ACT UP uses non-violent direct action as a tool to force change and reform in institutions and individuals which uphold the status-quo and bureaucratic ineptitude in the face of the AIDS crisis. Direct action is an effective form of resistance in addition to lobbying and more traditional pressure tactics. It is a form of civil disobedience which involves organizing creative actions (which are often illegal) against specific targets, as opposed to passive resistance which only requires non-cooperation. Actions are usually suggested by committees and discussed by the group as a whole. One effective kind of action is the zap. Zaps are swift acts of retribution at specific targets. They are planned quickly in response to a specific event or pronouncement that we want to protest and are consequently less carefully planned and more focussed than regular actions. Regular actions are more likely to address long-term goals and can be an effective way to do outreach and to get our issues into the media.

If you want to propose an action talk to a committee about organizing it or put it on the agenda for a ~~Monday~~ night meeting.

WEDNESDAY, 3600 HOTEL DE VILLE,
19h00.

Tel.: 527-2423