

Access is the issue

A recent CROP survey of English-speaking Quebecers shows that access to the province's health and social services in their language is of major concern. Citing such access as their first and most important issue, responders from across the province reported a consistent lack, or denial, of English services delivery. And while there were large divergences among the regions, there were also disparities among Montreal health system territories. This situation has implications for the access committees currently working with local health authorities on developing new access programs, and for community organizations working in the field.

This survey was commissioned by the CHSSN (Community Health and Social Services Network), and is the fourth of its kind in 20 years. Some changes were made this time. "We added many more specific questions on health sector issues to zero in on problem areas," explains **Joanne Pocock**, CHSSN consultant. "This additional information enables more detailed comparisons between regions or territories and between official language groups."

Both federal and provincial health agencies follow an administrative model that takes into account a range of specific factors that have a strong influence on health. These health determinants lay the groundwork for development of health promotion policies to bring about the best possible health outcomes. "Our objective in this report," says Pocock, "is to improve information on health and social services as a key health determinant for Quebec's official minority language communities. Access not only concerns geographic location but also language as key to delivery of those services."

The survey was conducted by telephone among randomly selected respondents: 3,133 anglophones and 1,000 francophones. Focus groups were consulted in six regions. In total, only 22.5 percent of English speakers were totally satisfied with the availability of health services in their region. Some other examples of responders' experiences:

Requests for English: 19 percent of responders felt uncomfortable asking for services in English.

CLSC: 57 percent were served in English; 23 percent asked but did not receive English services.

ER or outpatient clinic: 31 percent (65 percent in the East End) were not served in English; 34 percent of **admission personnel** did not speak English; **translation** services were not offered to 83 percent.

Overnight hospital stay: 32 percent of females, 17 percent of males, asked but were not served in English. For 40 percent, admission and consent forms and pre- or post- hospital instructions were not available in English. For 81 percent, no translation services were provided.

Wait time for a specialist for over five months was experienced by 19 percent of anglophone females and by 25 percent of francophone females.

Info Santé or Info Social: 41 percent of survey responders were not served in English.

Seniors: 36 percent of anglophones expected to need public long-term care within five years, 31 percent of francophones did. Homecare will be needed by 35 percent of anglophones, 28 percent francophones.

Unpaid caregivers: 20 percent were not at all satisfied with English-language caregiver support (46 percent were satisfied on the West Island).

Information on local services available in English was received by only 17 percent of responders.

Sixty percent of Montreal responders expressed confidence in the future of their local English-speaking community (40 percent in the East End). Of these, 64 percent were male, 50 percent, female.

Results of the *CHSSN-CROP Community Health and Social Survey* are available at chssn.org/base_line_data.

New network in NDG

The NDG Senior Citizens' Council will soon be modifying its vocation, its name and its mandate. A highly effective voice for the rights of older people since 1975, the Council is now in the process of linking up with other community organizations to establish a network of partners that will nurture the broad range of social services needs of English-speakers in the western region of Montreal Island. It will be part of the Network Partnership Initiative (NPI) developed by the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN).

“Our name will be changing because the new NPI will deal with more than just seniors,” explains **Sheri McLeod**, executive director. “Within the NPI our initial mandate will still be local, in NDG and Montreal West, but this new network of partners will cover the whole health system territory. It’s based on an inter-sectoral approach. We’re not changing our boundaries, but we’re broadening our horizon. We’re thinking outside the box.”

The Council’s operations have continuously evolved over the years. “We used to be involved in social action,” says McLeod. “Now the focus is on policy, research, and community development. But although we don’t actually mobilize, there is still an advocacy aspect to our work.”

That includes individual advocacy for seniors dealing with problems related to such issues as housing, finances, and access to health services. An important element of the Council’s mandate is support for low income adults experiencing poverty and social isolation. Last year the Council conducted a strategic clarification of its activities and their impact that led to a major internal restructuring and evaluation of future possibilities.

The future looks bright. “We’ve been receiving support for projects from the CHSSN for several years,” says McLeod, “so when they offered us the opportunity to create an official NPI, we saw this as a major step forward and a great opportunity. We expect to have full NPI status by 2023.”

Centraide celebrates success

Centraide of Greater Montreal is celebrating its best fund-raising campaign ever. Returns for the 2019 campaign amounted to \$59.7 million, thanks to the heightened generosity of Montreal donors and a vigorous army of volunteers. The monies are to further the work of Centraide’s 350 agencies in its quest to eliminate poverty and social exclusion.

In February, Centraide handed out its annual awards to recognize outstanding commitment to the goals of the agency. Among the 16 winners of a “Solidaire Award” and a grant of \$10,000 were the Centre for Community Organizations (COCO), and **Pierrette Gagné**, executive director of the Information and Referral Centre of Greater Montreal. **Taïeb Hafsi**, professor at HEC Montreal and major volunteer, received the Michèle Thibodeau-DeGuire Award, for his exceptional contribution to the advancement of Centraide.

Tel-Aide needs listeners

Tel-Aide, for 50 years the biggest telephone listening service in Quebec, and the only bilingual one operating 24/7, is in dire need of volunteers. Last year 20,000 callers, forty per cent of whom were English-speaking, were able to access this free, confidential and anonymous service provided by volunteers trained in effective listening techniques.

Listeners don’t intervene or propose solutions. “People know what their problems are,” says **Anne Lagacé Dowson**, executive director, “and they fundamentally know what they should do. We’re there to provide a sounding board and help them process what’s happening to them.”

Volunteers receive 30 hours of training in active listening followed by 12 supervised hours on the job with an experienced listener. They serve for four hours at a time at a downtown location. “We’re not looking for experts,” explains Lagacé Dowson. “We need caring members of the community to help people who are suffering from isolation and loneliness.” For information: 514 935 1101.

Starting them young

A pilot program just launched by REISA at the Rivière-des-Prairies Library is so successful that plans are already under way to expand it. The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program is based on bringing parents and young children – aged four and under – together in a group setting to participate in using rhymes and storytelling. This concept has been highly effective elsewhere in nurturing the parent/child relationship while developing children’s language and pre-literacy skills. It is the first program offered fully in English by the library.

“We didn’t know how many to prepare for,” says **Claudia Maiolo**, REISA program coordinator. “The basic need is for five to 10 families at a time. We got 20 right away and set up two groups, the most we can handle just now. We’re still getting requests, so we hope to set up new groups in late summer and to open similar program in other neighbourhoods.”

New home for Chinese agency

Chinese Family Services Centre of Montreal is moving to a new site after some time of uncertainty on the future of their 30-year headquarters. The agency has purchased a building on Clarke Street, also in Chinatown, and the City has provided a \$150,000 grant for necessary renovations. The move is scheduled for late summer.

“We’ve been serving Montreal’s Chinese community since 1976,” says **Xi Xi Lee**, executive director. “With our new larger quarters, we’ll be able to share space for functions of other organizations. So it will be open to the broader community.”

The Centre offers a wide of services to Chinese residents and newly arrived immigrants – 5,000 a year. It provides assistance and referrals on social and health problems and offers day care, French courses, recreational and social activities for families and the elderly. As well as its Chinatown site, the Centre operates a satellite office in Brossard. Together they receive over 10,000 visits annually.

Making seniors stronger

Seniors Action Quebec is working on a project to introduce resilience training to English-speaking seniors in the province. Based on a highly successful model originally developed for children at risk, it is designed to facilitate confidence-building and to encourage self-advocacy.

“We thought that this kind of training could also help seniors,” says **Vanessa Herrick**, executive director. “It would be especially applicable for those without family support, to help them handle challenging situations. It will give them tools to navigate the public system better, if they have to ask for care to which they are entitled.

“We’re building an online educational model that will be available on our website for free,” says Herrick. “Our partners and anyone working with seniors can access it easily. A coordinator will work with community organizations on how to adapt the model to their needs either through onsite visits or online training. And we would like to eventually translate it and make it available in French.”

Foundation continues to grow

The Foundation of Greater Montreal (FGM) is celebrating this year both its 20th anniversary and its exceptional growth. The FGM is now the sixth largest community foundation in Canada, with over \$345 million in management assets. Since its founding, the Foundation has distributed more than \$60 million to over 1,200 charitable organizations.

The FGM is supported by donors – nonprofits, individuals, families and corporations – who have created funds within the Foundation. Proceeds from these investments are distributed either as FGM chooses or in areas designated by the donor.

Red Feather Foundation was one of the founding donors to the FGM, creating an endowment fund of \$500,000 to carry on its long history of supporting social services in Montreal.

Chefs in training

The Welcome Hall Mission is now in the catering business. The Mission has been running a program that prepares marginalized young clients for the culinary job market. It is designed for young people between the ages of 15 and 30 who are homeless or living in a precarious situation. Under the guidance of highly experienced chefs, they receive one year of training in the Mission kitchen that serves up to 3,000 meals a week. This program has recently been expanded to include provision of catering services to private and corporate events. For information: microenterprise@missionba.com.

More money for the elderly

The Quebec Minister responsible for seniors and caregivers, **Marguerite Blais**, has announced the creation of 2,600 new places for elder long-term care by 2022. The plan involves renovation of existing facilities as well as new construction. In addition to creating alternative types of housing for seniors with specific needs, the total cost of this venture will be \$2.5 billion.

Seniors' medication the topic

Seniors Action Quebec is holding two conferences on The Safe use of Medication. One is for seniors and family caregivers taking place on May 8, in Pincourt. The second, scheduled for Montreal on May 26, is for professional caregivers and staff of organizations providing services to seniors. Registration is essential. To register: ruthkathleenpelletier@gmail.com.

Shriners' property sold

The property on Cedar Avenue occupied until five years ago by the Shriners' Hospital for Children has been sold to the People's Republic of China for use as a consulate.

In brief

Jennifer Cooke has been named regional development officer – Montreal for the Community Health and Social Services Network.

Shauna Joyce has been named new executive director of Tyndale-St Georges.

Chantal LaFerrière is the new executive director of St. Michael's Mission.

Anne Lagacé Dowson has been appointed executive director of Tel-Aide.

Peter O'Brien was named winner of the 2020 St. Patrick's Society Community Award.

Dale Weil has been appointed executive director of the Teresa Dellar Palliative Care Residence (previously West Island Palliative Care Residence).

The Centre québécois de philanthropie has published a directory of the province's major corporate donors and foundations. Nonprofit organizations can access this source of funding online for \$143.10 or in hard copy for \$256.19. For information: <http://fondationsquebec.ca>

The Quebec Public Library Association has available a series of booklets that provide caregivers with information on various illnesses as well as related resources and sources of further information. Available at biblioaidants.ca/en/cahiers.

Volunteer Week is April 19 to 25. This year's theme is: "It's time to applaud this country's volunteers".

The story of Red Feather is available online at <http://redfeathermontreal.ca>

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309

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