

## Grass roots thin in new health system

Quebec's recent reformation of the province's healthcare system has significantly reduced the opportunities for citizen participation. Elimination of institutional boards and centralization of the regional administrative bodies combine to distance those institutions from their traditional grass roots support. How this will affect volunteer engagement and the public's influence on policy remains to be seen.

Certainly, the changes to regional administration are profound. The Montreal Health and Social Services Board (*Régie*) had a coordinating role, approved plans and assigned budgets, and advocated for the needs of the Montreal region. Board directors, who were selected through an electoral college of institutional and community representatives, named their own president.

The "Agency" that has replaced the Board has been given much more authority. In fact, it is now considered an extension of the Ministry, with a mandate to handle some of the government's responsibilities. Its board of directors and president are chosen directly by the government, the latter reporting only to the Minister. The board's input is strictly advisory. The Minister will be fine-tuning the system's new administrative framework in legislation to be introduced in October.

## Nursing home trio wants to merge

Having survived the government's plan to merge them into a local network – they have been granted supra-regional status – the St. Margaret's, Father Dowd and St. Andrew's nursing homes are asking to be merged together. Having one corporation instead of three would mean significant efficiencies in financial and human resources management.

"We would maintain the individual residences and their combined board," explains **Carole McDonough**, executive director of all three. "And donors would still be able to designate where they want their funding to be allocated."

## Groups could miss out on funding

The recent government announcement that its \$530 million funding of Quebec community groups would not be cut was widely welcomed. It was, however, coupled with an action plan that could adversely affect some of them, particularly those in the minority communities.

In a bid to "clean house", the plan includes a freeze on current funding to any new groups until regional profiles are conducted to establish needs and priorities. Groups' activities and accounts will also be audited. It will eliminate current "duplication" of services, and will not include new groups proposing to work in areas now handled by existing groups.

"That should concern the anglophone and cultural communities," says **Michael Stephens**, coordinator of the Centre for Community Organizations (COCO). "For instance, if only one mental health advocacy group is to receive core funding per region, it would no doubt be the francophone one. Would an existing English-speaking group be forced to merge with the majority organization? Furthermore, for groups to continue to be funded, it's likely that they will be required to fit into the narrow band of services that the government wants provided. These are questions yet to be answered, but we should be asking them."

## Community foundation news

BMO (Bank of Montreal) has launched a Support your Community program that aims to encourage charitable contributions to community foundations. It is the first and most widely available philanthropic program of its kind in Canada. Montreal BMO clients can now create their own charitable endowment fund at the Foundation of Greater Montreal (FGM) with only \$25,000.

FGM has received \$540,000 from an ex-Montrealer living in California to create an endowment fund in his name. **Guy Tiphane** is interested in youth, poverty and social problems.

## McGill language training to start

McGill University is about to launch its major new initiative to improve delivery of healthcare services to English-speaking Quebecers. It is a four-year program that will provide second-language training to health and social services professionals across the province, thus increasing the number of English-speakers among their ranks. Funded by a Health Canada grant of \$11.5 million, the program will operate out of the McGill Faculty of Arts.

“This is very much a collaborative effort,” says **Mireille Marcil**, program coordinator. “It is McGill personnel who will elaborate the basic framework for evaluating needs and defining process. But we’ll be working closely with anglophone communities in the regions, with local teaching institutions and with the regional healthcare agencies.”

It is anticipated that up to 4000 professionals will benefit from the training program. While this effort is primarily directed to francophone professionals, English-language staff working in francophone settings will be targetted as well. McGill will also be developing Web-based material to provide these “students” with access to continued professional support through long-distance learning and to maintain their level of second language competence.

## Posies perk up psychiatric patients

AMI-Quebec is bringing cheer to newly arrived psychiatric patients at the Montreal General Hospital by delivering them flowers and a get-well card. Flowers for Friendship is a pilot project that the organization hopes will be copied elsewhere.

“Unlike other patients, those in the psychiatric ward rarely receive flowers,” says **Ella Amir**, AMI executive director. “We give them potted flowering plants that they can enjoy during their stay, and can take home with them. The project is so easy to manage, and the patients’ reaction so positive, it certainly would be effective at other hospitals as well.” For further information: 514 486 1448.

## Calming kids using special training

The steady rise in aggressive behaviour of young people in schools and the community at large is a major issue of widespread concern. Batshaw Youth and Family Centres is running a program especially designed to tackle this problem. The agency has been sharing its expertise with other organizations also involved with young people. It is called Aggression Replacement Training (A.R.T.), and it is having an impact.

“A.R.T. is comprised of three basic components,” says **Robert Calame**, Batshaw’s A.R.T. specialist. “Adolescents learn how to behave in a more pro-social way through interpersonal skills training; how not to behave, through anger control training; and to reflect on their choices and how their behaviour affects others, through training in moral reasoning. It is an approach that has proven to be very effective.”

A.R.T is particularly successful when parents are involved. In one comparative study of youths who had required a social services intervention, of those who did not receive A.R.T., 43 percent got into trouble again within a year. Among those who did receive A.R.T., the recidivism rate was 25 percent. Among those who did A.R.T. with their parents, only 13 percent got into trouble again. For further information: 514 636 0910.

## CCS taking on advocacy role

CCS is reaching out to its members, clients and volunteers to measure their level of satisfaction with its services, as well as those from other social service organizations in the broader community. Its new Open Doors advocacy program is designed to give a voice to people in appraising the range, availability and calibre of services in Greater Montreal. “We’re not just looking for complaints,” explains **Cam Russell**, project coordinator, “although we do want to determine what needs are not being met. In effect, we want to build up the capacity of the community to be heard.” For further information: 514 937 5351, Ext. 245.

## Accomplished Mission

The Welcome Hall Mission is adding a new pavilion to its network of social services facilities. This downtown institution has been a stable source of assistance to indigent Montrealers for over 113 years. Although Christian-based, offering Bible-teaching to those interested, the Mission is non-denominational in practice.

The Mission was founded in 1892 by Thomas Macauley, who later became president of the Sun Life Company. He and a small group of young religious businessmen had set up a ministry in the poverty-ridden southwest area of the city. Their idea was to do Christian welfare work that would also reach non-church goers. They started with a drop-in recreational centre for young men and boys, but a broader need soon became apparent.

Today, the three-building Mission provides meals and overnight shelter for up to 175 transient men and operates a resident recovery program for male substance abusers. Its Children's Services program reaches up to 500 children in weekly recreational evenings held in different parts of the city. Meals and counselling are provided for 150 street youth every night. Over 1500 young students were provided with school supplies this fall. Up to 1,000 families use its food bank weekly; over 4,500 receive its Christmas baskets every year; over 1400 toys were given away last Christmas.

"We're one of the largest missions that serve the whole family," affirms **Cyril Morgan**, executive director. "We're fine-tuning all our programs right now to make sure they're running properly. But one of our biggest challenges is to ensure stable funding so that we're flexible enough to respond to ever-increasing demands for our services."

The new pavilion, in Saint-Henri, houses the Mission's Family and Community Services program and a new community thrift shop. New housing for 50 men participating in its residential recovery program is scheduled to open next spring. For further information: David Lussier 514 523 5288.

## Volunteer network announces grants

The Volunteer Bureau of Montreal and the Community Council on Volunteerism are two of the organizations in the Montreal region to receive grants from the *Réseau de l'action bénévole du Québec* (RABQ). Nineteen organizations were chosen from among the 65 applicants. They represent several sectors in which volunteers play an important role, including volunteer bureaus, sports and recreation, environment, seniors and literacy.

The Community Council on Volunteerism, representing the "anglophone community", received \$7,500 to set up a workshop on capacity building, for managers of volunteers. "This is a very important, yet little explored area," says **Rosemary Byrne**, CCV president. "It's vital for the volunteers, for the manager and for their organization."

The Volunteer Bureau of Montreal received \$15,000 to revamp its volunteer training programs. "We've been using much the same material for the last 10 years," says **Kevin Cohalan**, VBM executive director. "Our programs would benefit from the latest advances in research and training techniques." For further information on RABQ: 514 272 4004.

## A refuge for refugees

A small house on Sherbrooke Street East has become a crucial way station for refugees seeking asylum in Canada. Refuge Juan Moreno has been providing emergency shelter for up to 150 women and children a year for the past 10 years. As well as the basic needs of food and lodging, the Refuge staff and volunteers provide counselling and accompany the residents through the complex immigration and refugee claimant process.

"We try to provide a family-like environment while they're with us," says **Maura McGrath**, the Congregation-de-Notre-Dame Sister who founded the shelter. "And we follow their progress and provide our moral support after they've moved on." For further information: 514 525 0017.

## Centraide studies its territory

Centraide of Greater Montreal has completed the first year of a three-year project to create profiles of the city's neighbourhoods. These territorial studies are intended to provide a thorough knowledge of the dynamics of local communities, which will further assist Centraide in helping in their development and empowerment. The information will also be useful in determining the allocation of funds and measuring the impact of Centraide's action in the community. The profiles will also be a valuable resource for volunteers and donors to learn more about the communities' needs and how they are being met. They can be viewed at: [www.centraide-mtl.org](http://www.centraide-mtl.org).

## CCS shares its programs with business

CCS has begun an outreach project with Telus Mobility, bringing its parenting workshops to the company's work site. "Lots of young working parents don't want, or aren't able, to go out at night for this kind of help," says **Gail Casey**, coordinator of CCS's Adult Support Programs. "So we've been holding workshops during lunch hour. They've been so successful, we're planning more. We could add more topics, as well, since CCS runs a variety of educational programs on different aspects of family life." For more information: 514 937 5351, ext. 240.

## New national organization now official

After many months of wide-ranging consultation, the 23-year-old Canadian Centre for Philanthropy and the 30-year-old Coalition of National Volunteer Organizations have merged. One problem remains, however: no one has yet been able to come up with a suitable name for the new organization.

## Face of Volunteer Bureau changing

Over 3,000 people were interviewed by the Volunteer Bureau of Montreal last year for volunteer work: 41 percent had a mother tongue other than English or French. Chinese, followed by Arabic and Spanish, were the predominant languages spoken.

## In brief

**Margaret Douek** is the new assistant executive director at Batshaw Youth and Family Centres.

**Lili de Grandpré** has been named chair of the Allocations and Agency Relations Committee of Centraide of Greater Montreal.

**Cyril Morgan** is new executive director of the Welcome Hall Mission.

Dr. **Balfour Mount** was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Canada.

**Jacques Régis** has been appointed chair of the board of directors of Centraide of Greater Montreal.

**Barbara Whitley** has received the Caring Canadian Award for her long volunteer service at the Montreal General Hospital.

The Women's Centre of Montreal has temporarily re-located to 630 René-Lévèsque Blvd., 5<sup>th</sup> floor, Montreal H3B 1S6; telephone: 514 842 1066; fax: 514 842 1067.

The Centre for Community Organizations (COCO) is launching an Executive Director Learning Circle in October. For information: 514 849 5599.

The West Island Volunteer Bureau has changed its name to Volunteer West Island

The Volunteer Bureau of Montreal is holding a series of workshops on the Essentials of Volunteer Management. Call **Alison Stevens**: 514 842 3351.

AMI-Quebec is holding its annual Depression Screening Day, on October 7. For information on locations, call 514 486 1448.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309.
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