

CSSSs finishing first phase

Quebec's new Health and Social Services Centres (CSSS) are just completing the first phase of their mandate. Created last July as key to major reform of the province's healthcare system, the Centres actually started up in the fall as mergers of existing healthcare institutions proceeded. All CSSSs are scheduled to present their preliminary plans for the future by the end of this month, and to activate those plans within the year.

"It's very challenging," says **Marc Sougavinski**, executive director of the CSSS Côte-des-Neiges, Métro et Park Extension. "In just a few months, we have to create a totally new organization from several merged institutions. We have to identify the different issues affecting the people in our particular territory. And we have to set priorities and strategies on how we will address their needs."

The basic role of the CSSS is to organize all the healthcare services in its territory so as to ensure that they are accessible to the population that needs them. "We will guide our clients through the medical and social services network," Sougavinski explains. "There will be automatic and continuous follow-up of their cases. We don't want anyone, especially the most vulnerable, to fall between the cracks any more."

Sougavinski stresses the importance of working with community groups that are providing healthcare services. "They are indeed part of the global plan for ensuring a healthy population," he affirms. "We're reaching out to them, and also to other non-merged establishments. For example, our CSSS has just signed a service contract with the Jewish General and St. Mary's Hospitals and a local private clinic."

"It is the smallness of our administrative districts that will make such collaboration easier to manage," says Sougavinski. "In Montreal, we've gone from over 100 healthcare establishments, including 29 CLSCs, to 12 geographically defined health centres. If people's health improves by our being better organized, that's great. I think it is a good reform."

Major survey of anglos done

A major survey of English-speaking Quebecers' perspectives and experiences on health services and social issues has just been completed. Conducted by the national polling firm CROP, the survey was sponsored by the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN), the province-wide organization dedicated to accessibility to English services. Close to 3500 anglophones across the province were interviewed.

"This survey is a follow-up to one conducted five years ago," explains **Jennifer Johnson**, CHSSN executive director. "Its basic purpose is to underline the needs and concerns of English-speakers to Quebec's policy makers and public institutions. And to provide the information necessary for them to develop programs and services to better address those needs. By comparing the new results with the 2000 survey, we'll see what, if any, progress has been made since then."

To provide a basis for comparison, 1000 French-speaking Quebecers were also surveyed. The results of the study will be published in the fall.

Father Dowd ages well

The Father Dowd Home, one of Canada's oldest social service establishments, is celebrating its 140th birthday this year. Founded in 1865 by Father Patrick Dowd, pastor of St. Patrick's Basilica, it was originally called St. Bridget's Refuge. Its original mission was to provide a home for the aged and infirm, a night shelter for the homeless and a shelter for young women without work. Today it operates as a 135-bed long-term care facility for the elderly.

Funded and managed for over a century by the Roman Catholic Church, the Dowd in 1971 became a public establishment. Since 1992, it has been associated with St. Margaret's Home and St. Andrew's Home, also dedicated to serving English-speaking Montrealers. These venerable institutions will soon be integrated into a single legal entity.

Batshaw has new protective program

Batshaw Youth and Family Centres has launched a new program aimed at protecting young people from sexual exploitation. It has been estimated that some 4,000 young Montrealers between the ages of 12 and 25 are engaged in prostitution. How many are being lured into other sexually exploitative activities, such as pornography and nude dancing, is not known exactly.

"But we do know that it is becoming more and more of a problem," affirms **Lynn Dion**, Batshaw's resource person on STI/HIV Prevention and Youth-Sexuality-Related Issues. "Some young people get involved in the sex trade temporarily, and leave it on their own. But too many become trapped in that world. We want to prevent it from happening at all."

Dion has been designated as Batshaw's point person for dealing with this issue. She will receive the reports from caseworkers who observe any instance of Batshaw youth being recruited for, or implicated in, sexually exploitative activities. Having such information funneled into a central source will provide an immediate overview of what's happening throughout the Batshaw network.

"We'll be able to take preventive measures more quickly," Dion says. "We can intervene directly, and we'll also provide this information to the police. It is important to remember also that every citizen is legally bound to report any situation where a child is being sexually abused or exploited."

AMI-Québec offers new service

In addition to its successful group sessions for families of mentally ill persons, AMI-Québec is now providing support to individual families in a crisis situation with its new program, SUS-Famille. "A group setting is not always appropriate," says **Ella Amir**, executive director. "For instance, an ill person refusing treatment creates an additional burden on a family. We work with them privately to help resolve the problem." For information: 514 486 1448.

More help for the homeless

The Old Brewery Mission has just received funding to convert a nearby historical tavern into affordable housing for 30 homeless men and women. Grants from three levels of government will enable the Mission to purchase and renovate the 116-year old building. Scheduled to open at year-end, it will comprise 30 individual rooms, community kitchens and recreational facilities.

"We're very excited about this project," affirms **James Hughes**, executive director, "because it is the first time we've been in a position to offer long-term housing. We're very pleased, too, that we're able to hire a full-time professional worker to help these new residents integrate into society. Many might have problems, but we believe they'll cope much better in a normalized environment."

Other social housing initiatives are also adding to the stock of affordable accommodation available to Montreal's homeless. They include the new 45-unit residence opened by the Welcome Hall Mission this month and L'Accueil Bonneau, which opened 49 new units in May.

Reaching out to isolated seniors

CCS is venturing out of its traditional territory to help seniors on the West Island. Get Connected, a pilot program operating in Pierrefonds, aims to link seniors living in isolation to resources and services that will help them maintain their independent living. Funded by Centraide of Greater Montreal, the program is just entering its second phase.

"We first had to research the region to determine where there was the most need," explains **Carolyn Arsenault**, CCS outreach worker. "Pierrefonds was selected because of its rapidly increasing number of seniors. We're now working with service providers in the community to identify what is available. My job then is to reach isolated seniors and, working with them one-on-one, to act as their personal resource person. For information: 514 720 8416.

Museum mounts mental health mural

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts is exhibiting, until September 18, a mural of works submitted through mental health organizations from across Montreal. Symbolizing mental health challenges, the images are meant to emphasize the need for action in the field of mental health. The show is mounted as part of the Sharing the Museum program, in which the museum staff works with community organizations in developing projects reflecting their goals. For further information: Marilyn Lajeunesse, 514 285 2000, ext. 231.

Students step into volunteer service

Patients at the Royal Victoria Hospital will be treated to some extra attention this summer from the 60 students who join the hospital's Student Training & Education Program (STEP). So will the students who, as well as volunteering for a variety of patient services, will benefit from a series of seminars on health care as well as workshops to develop leadership and administrative skills.

"We certainly hope that this experience inspires some of the students to pursue a career in the healthcare field," says **Stella Aucoin**, of Volunteer Services. "But all of them will learn about hospital operations from interacting with patients and staff. And we hope that they will be turned on to do more volunteering in the future." For more information: 514 934 1943, ext. 34300.

Downtown natives getting together

Several downtown community organizations are joining forces to bring together residents, students, workers and First Nations people who frequent the Cabot Square area of downtown Montreal. With others, the Peter McGill Community Council and the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal are planning a series of summer events in the park to highlight native culture and of heritage. A First Nations and Inuit Festival will be held in the Square in September.

East End abuzz with access activity

Two provincial community networks, one urban community organization, three territorial healthcare centres and a regional healthcare agency. An impressive array of resources is being channeled towards improving access to English services in Montreal's East End. It is a milestone collaboration with important short and long-term benefits.

This welcome new initiative was spurred by two provincial anglophone organizations. The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) is funding a project developed by CCS (Catholic Community Services) to establish a network of community organizations serving the English-speaking residents of the East End. The Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN) is financing two accessibility improvement projects. One was proposed by the CSSS d'Ahuntsic et Montréal-Nord; the other, by the Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal in collaboration with the CSSS de la Pointe-de-File and the CSSS de Saint-Léonard et Saint-Michel.

"The Agency is very committed to the provision of English services in the East End," says **Heather Clarke**, Agency advisor on access to services in English. "That's why it is so supportive of this collaboration."

This joint effort is now well under way. The project promoters have held a consultation with community organizations dealing with local English-speakers. Their combined input will help provide a better picture of the actual state of services delivery, and what action needs to be taken to address any lacks. Local residents will be consulted in an upcoming telephone survey.

Access plans on the way

Postponed for many months because of reform of the healthcare system, revision of English service access plans is to begin soon. The Ministry is finalizing the new framework to be used by the healthcare agencies in their revision process.

Hospitals re-use under study

The Montreal Health and Social Services Agency is currently conducting studies on the future use of MUHC's hospitals to be closed when its new mega-hospital is completed. The government has first right of refusal for the Royal Victoria, The Children's and Chest Hospitals. If it decides to leave their future use to other parties, further studies and public consultations will ensue.

New fund for Foundations

The Foundation for Research into Children's Diseases has created a new endowment fund, in partnership with the Foundation of Greater Montreal. It has made an initial contribution of \$534,000 to this new "Hope Fund". Since its creation in 1977, the Foundation has donated over \$44 million to research into children's diseases and has become the single most important source of funding for pediatric research in Quebec.

Centraide presents annual awards

Centraide of Greater Montreal recently presented its annual awards of distinction. The Agnes C. Higgins Award for outstanding innovation by a Centraide-supported agency went jointly to the Victory Garden Network Program and TAPAJ, an alternative paid work project. The Gilles Cousineau Award, for outstanding work by an employee of a Centraide agency, went to **Aicha Guendafa**, executive director of CARI Saint Laurent, an immigrant assistance centre. **Claude Charon**, founding member of L'Antre Temps, a shelter for youth in difficulty, received the Antoinette Robidoux Award.

Government interested in opinions

The Health and Social Services Ministry has opened a new Website to provide information to, and receive opinions from, the general public: www.opinionsante.com. Another site has been set up to consult youth: www.espacei.gouv.gc.ca.

In brief

James Hughes, executive director of the Old Brewery Mission, has been named to the National Council of Welfare.

Nevine Fateen has been named manager of Adult Volunteer Services for the MUHC.

Bernard Lamarre and **Norman Legault** have joined the Foundation of Greater Montreal board.

Sue Silva of Batshaw Youth and Family Services received the Child Welfare of Canada Achievement Award in the Children's Services category.

CCS now offers two new adult support programs: Step-Parenting and Parenting of Teens. For information: 514 937 5351.

Santropol Roulant and Le bon Dieu dans la rue both received a 2005 Quebec Volunteerism Award.

The West Island Community Resource Centre has launched a resource directory for people living with disabilities. Contact: 514 694 6404.

The Women's Centre of Montreal has moved back to its now renovated facilities at 3538 Saint-Urbain.

The Volunteer Resource Centre at www.voluntccr.ca offers extensive information on volunteering and volunteer management.

Erratum: In the March issue of the *Forum*, in a story concerning Batshaw Youth and Family Centres locating its new campus on the grounds of the Douglas Hospital, the text should have read that an agreement in principle had been expressed at board meetings of the two institutions, but no agreement has yet been signed.

The editor welcomes story ideas 514 937 4309.

Legal deposit:
National Library of Canada ISSN 1709 092X
Bibliothèque nationale du Québec