

## Saving intellectually disabled services

New legislation passed by the National Assembly in early December has raised serious concern about the fate of English-language services for intellectually disabled persons. Bill 83 designates that the recently created CSSSs (local health and social services centres) take over all such services within their individual territories. They may either handle services delivery themselves, or sub-contract it to other organizations.

“The problem with this scenario is that these services could become splintered across Montreal,” says **Donald Foidart**, secretary general of the Montreal West Readaptation Centre (CROM). “Instead of relying on their traditional institutions – CROM has 25 years of expertise in the field – intellectually disabled anglophones and their families could face a hodgepodge of disjointed services. They could well find themselves dealing with several CSSSs for different services, rather than with a single coordinator, as is now the case.”

Foidart cites the example of disabled persons living with foster families in a part of the city other than that of their own families. “That would add another layer of confusion to a confusing situation,” he affirms. “It would be a bureaucratic maze.”

CROM has a solution. It has joined forces with the Centre de réadaptation Lisette Dupras and the Centre de réadaptation Gabrielle Major to propose a new administrative setup for services across the Island of Montreal. The new structure would have one director general reporting to these centres’ three individual boards. It would have an associate director general responsible for English services.

“It would address our three current territorial zones,” Foidart explains, “in order not to disrupt any client services. But there will be broader distribution of services. The Lisette Dupras would service francophones on the West Island, and East End anglophones could come to CROM. We’ll be taking this proposal to the community in January.”

## Info-Santé to be improved

Quebec’s health assistance telephone line, Info-Santé, will soon be much more accessible to the province’s English-speakers. Swamped with over two million calls a year, the service is undergoing a major overhaul. Dovetailing into the government’s endeavour is a project spearheaded by the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN) that makes services in English an integral part of the revamped system.

It is not too soon. A recent survey sponsored by the CHSSN revealed that 60 per cent of English-speaking Quebecers have never heard of Info-Santé, and of those that had, 70 percent did not know that it could be offered in English. While 30 per cent used the service at least once in their lives, only 15 per cent had done so within the previous year.

“But that situation is about to change,” affirms **Mariëlle Lavallée**, coordinator of the project. “Once the new system is running, four regions will operate a provincial telephone network staffed by English-speaking nurses: Montreal, Estrie, Laval, and the Outouais. Any time that another region not be able to respond to an English-speaking caller, the call will be transferred into this network.”

To ensure that a solid bank of English-speaking nurses is available, the CHSSN has been sponsoring courses to upgrade their command of the language. Once all the elements are in place, a publicity campaign will be launched to promote the service among English-speaking Quebecers. The project is being funded by Health Canada.

## Complementarity consternation

Quebec’s attempts to enforce ‘complementarity’ on the city’s two new mega-hospitals have been causing much concern. The loss of traditional specialized services would have a major adverse impact on both institutions. Talks continue, and the MUHC asserts that it is “determined to continue to offer comprehensive care, teaching and research.”

## New director set to manage

Dr. **Wendy Thomson**, newly appointed director of the McGill School of Social Work, comes to the task fresh from a sojourn at 10 Downing Street. A School alumna, with a British doctorate in Social Administration, Thomson followed a varied career in England that included senior executive positions in social policy development and municipal government. It was a combination that caught the attention of Prime Minister Tony Blair, who invited Thomson to run his Office of Public Services.

“It was a very exciting time,” says Thomson, “and it capped several years of honing my skills in managing huge departments and big budgets. The numbers at McGill are different but the same principles apply, and I have some ideas for making the School run better. Right now we’re planning for the long view, and facing some important choices.”

“The School has been so short on resources, but happily we’ve got the go-ahead to hire three more professors. We’ve also been able to adjust our joint PhD program with the University of Montreal to allow unilingual anglophones to enroll. We’re also looking for resources to launch a program of continuing professional development and to address social work education for our Inuit and First Nations communities. And there’s more to come.”

“Communication is also a very important element for the School. We’ve started holding ‘town hall’ meetings with community organizations in the English-speaking social services network. And I’ve also introduced a system of monthly briefings on what’s happening in the School and the social work field. It’s accessible to everyone on our Web site ([www.mcgill.ca/socialwork](http://www.mcgill.ca/socialwork)).”

“I’m interested in making public services work for the people who use them. That requires a cadre of professionals able to provide the leadership and management talent to organize those services. Our Master’s students are the future leaders of the social services system, so we must give them those skills.”

## Teens benefit from volunteering

A volunteer program run by the Tyndale St-George’s Community Centre in Little Burgundy is attracting teenagers from across the city. Called Teens for Change, it lines up high school students to work with youngsters who are enrolled in the Centre’s after school program. The older students help the children with their homework and lead them in recreational activities.

“It’s a doubly beneficial experience for them,” says **Irmeli Vastamaa**, volunteer coordinator. “For most of them, this is their first ‘job’, so they learn how to take on the responsibility of work. There is always an adult educator in charge of the room whom they can consult. And we provide an intern, usually from Dawson College’s Social Work program, to help them tackle their tasks. The intern also holds debriefing sessions at the end of each session when the students can discuss any problems that might have arisen and how they handled them.”

During its five years of operation, over 300 teens have participated in this volunteer program. Many had been in the after-school program themselves. Those who complete their volunteer commitment receive a letter of reference pointing out their assets. “They can use this reference in future job searches,” says Vastamaa. For information: 514 931 6265.

## Montreal Foundation news

La Fondation des victimes du 6 décembre contre la violence has entrusted the Foundation of Greater Montreal (FGM) to manage a new endowment fund honouring the 14 young women massacred at the Ecole polytechnique in 1989.

The FGM’s 2005 grants allot \$15,000 to each of five community organizations: Santrapol Roulant, Equiterre, Journée de la culture, l’Ancre des jeunes and Vivre St-Michel en Santé. The Foundation has also distributed \$147,500 in annual grants from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Fund to the eight hospitals in McGill’s teaching network.

## East End network making progress

The drive to improve access to English language services in Eastern Montreal is quickly gaining momentum. A new 17-member network has been established by service providers and community groups serving the isolated English population. And several pioneering initiatives are under way.

“There was a positive reaction from the very start,” says **Fatiha Gatre-Guermiri**, coordinator of the ‘Cultivating Roots’ program of CCS (Catholic Community Services), which is playing a key role in the project. “At our first consultation meeting, we learned that most people didn’t know anything about each other’s organizations. But partnerships were struck on the spot among people wanting to work together. And three CSSSs offered to organize a major telephone survey to assess the actual needs of East End anglophones. We’ll have the results sometime this month.”

The network has already begun looking at problems concerning seniors, youth, and intellectually handicapped persons. Because so many east Montreal anglophones must seek out English services in western part of the city, transportation is also a major issue.

## Charities asks Gomery to refocus

Imagine Canada, the national voice of Canadian charities, is concerned that fallout from the Gomery Inquiry will seriously hamper the functioning of the voluntary sector. It argues that “government’s excessive concerns about financial accountability have shifted the focus of nonprofits from delivering critical programs and services to tracking such minor expenditures as the number of pencils and photocopies used by employees”.

The national organization asks that Justice Gomery put forward recommendations that will strike the right balance between the need for financial controls and the effective and efficient operations of charities and nonprofit organizations.

## McGill language training popular

The major English-language training program undertaken by McGill to help francophone healthcare professionals better serve their anglophone clientele has aroused strong interest across the province. The regional healthcare Agencies have selected over 1,000 staff members who will be participating in the first phase of the program, which starts in January. There are nearly 2,000 more on the waiting list.

“There were over 900 applicants in the Montérégie alone,” says **Mireille Marcil**, program coordinator. “The local teaching institutions selected to provide the courses have only so much capacity. But we certainly want to eventually include as many as possible. We expect at least 4,000 in total.”

Marcil points out that these are not conversation courses. “The training is very targeted,” she explains, “and is oriented as to which type of institution or services these professionals are involved with. It’s important for them to understand and to be understood.”

The program is not only for French speakers. Its second element is language training and professional support for anglophones working in the region. That segment also starts in January. The project is funded by an \$11.5 million grant from Health Canada.

## Getting an early start on giving

From a poor rural community in Ontario, he started working in 1890 at age 14 as a delivery boy for a Toronto flower shop. Ten years later, by then a chemicals salesman, he moved to Montreal, and for a time roomed at the downtown YMCA. As he set out on a highly successful business career, he began making donations to the Y of \$10 a month – equivalent to \$200 today. In 1906, he led a massive fundraising campaign for the Y that in 13 days raised \$320,000 (\$6 million). In 1937, he founded the James W. McConnell Family Foundation, a cornerstone of Canadian philanthropy.

## Keeping seniors on their feet

The Almage Senior Community Centre wants to reduce the number of elderly people who are in hospital because of falls. "There were over 11,000 seniors hospitalized for falls last year alone," says **Philomena Manno**, the Centre manager. "We're planning to introduce a program that helps seniors to improve their limb strength and stability."

The 12-week program is called STAND UP! Led by a professional physiotherapist, trained volunteers direct group exercises that the participants are expected to also follow at home. The program provides a follow-up on their progress and teaches preventive measures to avoid falls. While the program would be first offered to Centre members, Manno expects that eventually it could be extended to areas outside the Almage territory. For further information: 514 355 1712.

## Donations are climbing

Canadians hit a record level of giving in 2004. According to Statistics Canada, donations to Canadian charities were up by 6.3 per cent over the previous year, reaching an unprecedented total of \$6.9 billion. Nearly half of those monies, \$3.4 billion, was raised in Ontario. Quebecers, fourth in line, donated \$680.3 million.

Total donations were up everywhere in the country, but the highest increases were scored in the west. The Yukon, Alberta, the Northwest Territories and British Columbia tallied increases that ranged between 12.5 per cent and 17.5 per cent. Donations in Quebec only rose by one per cent.

## Volunteer Bureau business booming

The number of organizations using the services of the Volunteer Bureau of Montreal has been steadily increasing. In 2004-05, 80 new clients signed on, bringing the total to 815. During the same period, the Bureau interviewed over 1500 people who were interested in serving as volunteers.

## In brief

**Tim Brodhead**, president and CEO of the James W. McConnell Family Foundation, was awarded an honorary doctorate from Dalhousie University.

**Teresa Dellar**, founder of the West Island Palliative Care Residence received a 2005 Woman of the Year award from the Montreal Council of Women.

**Linda Hachey** is the new executive director of Project Chance, succeeding retiring **Suan Cross**.

**Xi Xi Lee** has been appointed acting executive director of Chinese Family Services.

**Jane Rabinowicz** has been appointed executive director of Santropol Roulant.

Father **John Walsh** was elected president of CCS (Catholic Community Services).

Bishop Whalen School students in grades 5 and 6 won an award for their inter-generational project for helping seniors in Lachine.

The Quebec government is calling for nominations for its annual Hommage bénévolat-Québec awards. There are three categories: young volunteer (14 to 30 years); volunteer in action (31 years plus); and volunteer organization. Deadline is February 3, 2006. For information: [www.benevolat.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.benevolat.gouv.qc.ca).

Le Centre québécois de philanthropie has available, for purchase, two publications to assist nonprofits: a directory of Quebec foundations and funding sources, and a listing of potential business donors and sponsors. For information: 1 866 341 2547.

The Youth Volunteer Audit, for volunteer managers, can be purchased through [www.rethinkgroup.ca](http://www.rethinkgroup.ca).

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309.

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