

Lots of consultation coming

Quebecers will have ample opportunity in the coming year to hear –and participate in – discussions and debates on the province’s healthcare system. A central topic in much of the dialogue will be the future of the Canada Health Act.

The Commissioner of Health, appointed in 2006 for a five-year term, is to examine what is wrong with the health system and make recommendations on its improvement. **Robert Salois** will be calling upon citizens to serve on a public consultation forum. His call for candidates will appear in the fall. For further information: www.csbe.gouv.qc.ca.

Claude Castonguay, former Minister of Health, has been named by the government to head a task force that will study financing of the healthcare system. It has not yet been decided whether the task force will hold a public consultation before presenting its report in the fall.

The Quebec College of Physicians is holding a health summit this fall to discuss improving the management, organization and financing of the health system. Attendance is restricted to healthcare professionals and workers and patients’ groups.

The McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) has established an Institute for Strategic Analysis and Innovation to promote healthcare innovations. One of its tasks is to create a forum for discussion. This will involve a series of roundtable consultations, followed by a conference in the winter of 2008, which will bring together stakeholders in the health field to explore needs and possibilities for the future.

Cutting fat to help the system

The Quebec government and the Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon have each pledged a total of \$200 million over the next 10 years to reduce obesity and promote healthy living habits in the population. It is expected that improving Quebecers’ health will reduce pressure on the province’s healthcare system.

In brief

Centraide of Greater Montreal has presented its 2007 volunteer awards:

- The Agnes C. Higgins Award for outstanding innovation by a Centraide-supported agency went jointly to the Volunteer Bureau of Montreal and Pro-gam, a centre for intervention and research in conjugal and family violence.
- The Gilles Cousineau Award, honouring the work of a Centraide agency employee, went to **Lorraine Decelles**, from La Maison d’Aurore.
- The Antoinette Robidoux Award, for an outstanding volunteer working in a Centraide agency, was awarded to **Robert Proulx**, Centre d’action bénévole de Saint-Hubert.
- The new Antoinette Robidoux Award, Young Volunteer, was awarded to **Catherine Shvets**, a volunteer at PROMIS.

The Volunteer Bureau of Montreal also received a 2007 Hommage Bénévolat-Québec Award.

Alex K. Paterson was named chair of the Foundation of Greater Montreal.

Nominations are open for the 2007 Centennial Flame Research Award for persons with disabilities. For information: HUMA@parl.gc.ca.

Montreal will host the World Conference on Ageing in September 2008.

The Pilgrim Project, which operated a hospice and bereavement program on the West Island, has closed.

The Centre québécois du philanthropie has published two reference guides to donors: [Fonds & fondations](#) and [Les entreprises donatrices et commanditaires](#). For information: www.cqp.qc.ca.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309

Legal deposit:

National Library of Canada ISSN 1709 092X

Bibliothèque nationale du Québec

Black centre is coming back

Residents of Little Burgundy will soon have their old community centre back. Founded eighty years ago, the Negro Community Centre (NCC), which was closed in 1994, is being restored. The building is undergoing repairs and renovations, the redevelopment program is in place, and a long-term business plan is being drafted. The NCC/Charles H. Este Cultural Centre is expected to open in 2008.

The NCC was founded in 1927 to alleviate adverse social and economic conditions among Blacks in Montreal. It set up its operations in what was then a Methodist Church on Coursol Street. (The NCC soon became a member of United Red Feather Services.) The organization started having operating and financial difficulties in the late ’80s and was forced to close in 1994.

“We’ve been through a lot,” says **Shirley Gyles**, chair of the Centre’s board. “But we’re on the right track now. The board and community members are very much in charge of the project. Montreal is giving us \$3 million for renovations, and prospects for other funding are positive, particularly since our charitable tax status was restored last fall.”

The new Centre will provide low-cost housing for seniors, a reference library, multipurpose rooms and rental space for community organizations. “We’re targeting young adults and their families and older people,” says Gyles, “but we won’t be duplicating services that are already available.”

Project Genesis turns 30

Project Genesis, a Côte-des-Neiges nonprofit, has been championing the rights of the poor since 1977 in a community where 40 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. While assisting those in need, its focus is on mobilizing residents to work for social change. “We’re very much volunteer-driven,” says Claire Abraham, volunteer and membership coordinator. “Our clients are our workers. They’re living the problems we’re all working to resolve.”

MAB-Mackay makes changes

The MAB-MacKay Rehabilitation Centre has reorganized all its clinical services into two age-oriented program modules. The Mackay will handle programs concerned with children and youth, the MAB will address the needs of adults and seniors. This two-pronged approach to serving handicapped anglophones is a first for Quebec.

“One of the main reasons for this decision,” explains **Christine Boyle**, executive director, “is that many children suffer from more than one impairment. Caring for their visual or hearing loss and language or motor disabilities at a single site makes practical sense. It will provide the opportunity to develop expertise and design specific programs for them. It will help their parents as well.”

Adults with vision and hearing loss will be looked after at the MAB site, which will continue to operate its 59-bed nursing home for seniors. Staff will be moved according to their specific age-related expertise. “It’s a huge undertaking,” says Boyle, “but we expect everything to be in place by the beginning of next year.”

Anglos not a monolithic minority

A new report on the Community Health and Social Services Network’s 2005 CROP survey of Quebec’s English-speaking community describes a community with multiple identities, mixed sociocultural characteristics, regional diversity and significant variations in those factors that affect the community’s vitality. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents feel that their community is threatened and their future uncertain. Close to one-third of younger anglophones anticipate leaving their communities within five years. Twenty-five percent of the respondents claim dual identities, feeling that they belong to both the anglophone and francophone communities. The report underlines that Quebec’s traditional one-size-fits-all approach to the anglophone community neglects its internal diversity. For further information: www.chssn.org.

Helping children to grieve

Long a provider of palliative care in the community, NOVA (formerly the V.O.N.) West Island has become involved with helping children to cope with loss and bereavement. Its Carousel program for young people having difficulties with a loved one's ongoing illness or death answers a long-standing need for anglophone children in the region.

"I chose the name to represent a circle of support," says **Carol Jonas**, NOVA's bereavement counsellor. "I actually take a carousel that plays the Carousel Waltz with me on my first visit. Many of the children understand right away what it symbolizes and respond to its happy melody."

Jonas provides one-on-one counselling, coupling discussion and comforting with creative activities that foster healing and remembering. "There are many kinds of loss," affirms Jonas. "It could be the death of a relative, a friend, a pet, the effects of parents' divorce or even the loss of a home. Hurt is hurt; they need to talk about it, because it otherwise can stay with them a very long time." For further information: cjonas@novawi.org.

More aboriginal social workers due

The McGill School of Social Work has launched a drive to increase the number of aboriginal social workers in Inuit and Indian communities. "We first consulted the native peoples on their communities' needs and how best we could prepare our students to address them," explains **Oonagh Aiken**, Human Resources project coordinator. "We held workshops in Nunavik, Kahnasatake and Kahnawake to discuss our findings and share opinions."

The School is proposing changes to its curriculum to incorporate a more native-sensitive component and to use pedagogical methods more attuned to native cultures. Plans are being developed to provide a support system for its aboriginal students. The next prospect would be expansion of this inclusive approach into other healthcare disciplines at McGill.

CCS reaches out to isolated seniors

The very positive results of a recent pilot project with West Island seniors has convinced CCS that the program is worth continuing. Getting Connected was designed to help isolated seniors to maintain independent living by linking them up with available local services. Ready access to the appropriate resources would help prevent their hospitalization or premature institutionalization.

"Our outreach worker actually went looking for seniors that might need such help," says **Zenny Bryniawsky**, CCS executive director. "She met over 400 people, and was able to assist the 44 that needed information and access to healthcare services. In one low-cost housing project, seniors were helped to form a recreational group that now meets weekly. That kind of activity will break down the social isolation that so many older people experience."

The three-year pilot, which was funded by Centraide of Greater Montreal, was carried out in Pierrefonds, the community with the highest growth rate of seniors in the region. CCS was able to pull together a network of local service providers that propelled the project forward. "Their cooperation was key," affirms Bryniawsky. "We've established such a solid foundation that we're now looking for alternative funding to have the project continue." For further information: 514 937 5351, ext. 234.

UN convention on disabled a milestone

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that was adopted at the United Nations in December 2006 was opened for signature on March 30. Eighty-two countries, including Canada, signed the landmark agreement protecting the rights of the world's 650 million disabled people.

The Convention prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in all areas of life, including employment, access to justice, education, health services and transportation. The pact requires that public spaces and buildings be made accessible.

Literacy program at Children's

The Centre for Literacy has begun a pilot project at the Montreal Children's Hospital designed to encourage reading by both children and their parents. It is based on studies proving that more literate parents are more inclined to have their well children receive medical attention, for vaccinations and so on. "It gets the at-risk population involved in preventive medicine," says **Linda Shohet**, Centre executive director.

Medical staff in four pediatric units will discuss with parents the importance of reading to children's cognitive development. The parents will also be informed about adult literacy programs. Families will receive books in their mother tongue and volunteer readers will be available in clinics and waiting areas to read to children.

It is a timely project. The Canadian Council on Learning reports that more than half of Canadians lack the literacy skills to follow directions on pill bottles. Nearly ninety percent of Canada's seniors lack the literacy skills needed to deal with health information. "The Patient Safety Institute is now taking on this issue," says Shohet. "That might encourage hospitals and institutions to finally take health literacy more seriously."

Tracking anglos in healthcare system

Quebec is aiming to streamline the flow of client information within the province's healthcare network by having all institutions put common client indexes in their information systems. The Saint Bridge's-Jeffrey Hale complex in Quebec City has made recommendations on how language might be included as one of the identifying characteristics used in the Health Ministry's master patient index.

"It's been extremely difficult to follow any healthcare user," says **Louis Hanrahan**, executive director. "It's impossible to track anglophone clients. If we know what services they are using, however, we'll know if and how their needs are being met."

Youth Protection law revamped

Three years of expert review and two years of public consultations have resulted in major overhaul of Quebec's Youth Protection Act. The goal was to modernize the judicial process and to bring more flexibility to the system but, especially, to ensure the stability and continuity of care for children in placement. "It's a really good law," affirms **Michael Godman**, Batshaw director of Youth Protection. Godman was a member of the expert panel that advised the government on changes to the Act.

One of the new legislative amendments places strict limits on the duration of a child's temporary placement and introduces a new category of guardianship for permanent care. It is a subsidized tutorship under which extended family members or a foster family would be financially assisted to take in children who cannot be left with their parents. "But they may retain contact with parents and siblings," says Godman. "This provision is unique in Canada."

"The panel was guided by new studies proving that there is a serious impact on the brain development of children who are traumatized at a very young age," says Godman. "I'm proud to have brought that information to the discussion table and, as the only anglophone on the panel, that the contribution of our community was recognized."

Business volunteers in business

The idea of recruiting business professionals to lend their expertise to nonprofit organizations is catching on. Since it was launched last fall by two young Montreal entrepreneurs, **Ugo Dionne** and **Marie-Pierre Dufort**, Bénévoles d'Affaires (BA) has attracted over 200 volunteers to its roster. They advise on human resources management, accounting and other areas where nonprofits lack professional skills. "We knew that many business people were willing to get involved, but they needed to be approached and, most importantly, matched with the group that interested them. That's what we do." For further information: www.benevolesdaffaires.org.