

## **CSSS adopts anglo nursing homes**

Plans are under way for the St. Andrew's, Father Dowd and St. Margaret's nursing homes to come under the direct administration of the Cavendish Health and Social Services Centre (CSSS). Approved by the regional health Agency, the change awaits imminent approval by the government.

"This is a decision that benefits both parties," says **Francine Dupuis**, CSSS director general. "The homes are at a disadvantage now when it comes to funding for administration and operations because of their size. We're pleased to integrate these long-term-care homes into our institution because they will strengthen our mission towards the elderly. We think of them as new members of our family. And for continuity, we've named one member from the standing boards\* of each of these anglophone homes to our new advisory committee for the elderly."

(\*The government has ruled that all elected institutional boards are to be terminated in June.)

## **Health symposium a success**

Over 100 delegates from both public and community sectors met in Montreal in March to exchange experiences and ideas on meeting the health and social services needs of older adults. This Seniors Health Symposium was meant to encourage community groups and health establishments to work more closely together to better respond to a growing challenge. Co-chairs of the event were the Cummings Jewish Centre for Seniors and Quebec City-based Jeffrey Hale Community Partners.

## **PM vows to value volunteers**

The volunteer sector received some welcome recognition in the federal government's Throne Speech of March 4. In its list of commitments for the future, the government pledged that "To recognize the enormous contribution volunteers make to Canada, our Government will also establish a prime ministerial award for volunteerism."

## **Palliative care pilot at St. Mary's**

St. Mary's Hospital, in collaboration with the MUHC and CSSS de la Montagne, has introduced a pilot program for delivering palliative care that could well be adapted throughout the healthcare system. It is based on videoconferencing between nursing teams and cancer patients upon their discharge from hospital. Designed to maintain a continuum of care, regular video sessions enable the healthcare practitioners to provide ongoing aid in pain management and to monitor patient symptoms on a daily basis.

The setup is quite simple. The patients are taught how to use the web camera and laptop computer that is provided to them at home. They can communicate daily with nursing teams at St. Mary's and the CSSS who evaluate their health status on an ongoing basis and so can take preventive action whenever necessary. As well as the advantages of being wired directly into the healthcare system, the telehealth palliative program also provides the psychological benefits of living at home, and reducing trips to hospital. All in all, a much improved quality of life.

## **Grace Dart moving west**

The Grace Dart Extended Care Centre (GDECC) is moving from its Montreal East site to new facilities on the West Island. One of the anglophone community's most venerable institutions, and among the first members of the Red Feather family, Montreal Extended Care was founded in 1863 as the Protestant House of Industry and Shelter, built on farmland bequeathed by Thomas Molson. The Grace Dart Hospital was founded in 1907 as a tuberculosis sanatorium. The two were merged in 1999.

The GDECC nursing home complex provides care for close to 400 elderly people. In recent years, for lack of local services, more and more of its clients were coming from the West Island. This fact, and the age of its century old buildings, triggered the decision by the GDECC to move west, closer to its clients and into upgraded facilities.

## Mission moves men out

The Old Brewery Mission (OBM) is setting records for the number of homeless men that have moved through its transition program into homed living. Because of this intermediate counselling, some 500 men who had sought emergency shelter were able to move into stable accommodations in the community during the past year.

“That’s very gratifying, for all of us,” affirms **Matthew Pearce**, OBM executive director. “Our goal is to make sure that emergency shelter is really a short-term proposition. We’re working to increase the effectiveness of our transition program and will continue to develop options for those clients who are ready for autonomous living. That includes creating and managing social housing: we now have 120 transition apartments for men and are opening a 29-unit apartment complex for women this spring.”

The province has pledged \$14 million to combat homelessness, and has indicated that significant sums would be allotted to the city’s three large shelters later this spring. “That’s good news,” says Pearce, “they can’t go it alone. If such monies are to be well spent, they need to collaborate with us. If that is their intention, they can count on us.”

## Anglos now using Info-Santé

Info-Santé, the government’s health information line, has finally found response among English-speaking Quebecers. During 2009, anglophones were calling Info-Santé at the rate of 2,000 per day (up to over 3,000 during the H1N1 pandemic). Four years earlier, a survey by the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN) revealed that 60 percent of Quebec’s anglophones had never heard of Info-Santé. Of those who did use the service, 70 percent did not know they could receive information in English. It was a CHSSN project sponsored by Health Canada, in partnership with the provincial Health Ministry, that provided English language training for Info-Santé responders and translated pertinent documentation into English for their use.

## What do anglos want/need?

A major survey of English-speaking Quebecers is now under way to determine what are their needs and concerns on such issues as health and social services, justice, education and employment. It is designed to measure the vitality of the anglophone community and how it may have changed over time. Commissioned by the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN), the survey is being conducted by the national polling firm CROP.

This is the third such survey. The first, in 2000, provided the first real insight into how anglophones perceive the reality of their status as a minority community. The second, in 2005, followed up with the same respondent base (1000 anglophones and 200 francophones) to record changes in attitudes and experiences. This third survey, involving the same respondents, will provide a clear measure of changes that might have taken place as a result of government action.

“It’s basically a perception survey,” explains **Jennifer Johnson**, CHSSN executive director. “Are anglophone Quebecers receiving equitable services from government? Are they satisfied with the services they receive? During the past five years, there has been a major reorganization of government services in Quebec. How has that affected the anglophone community? CROP will provide some of the answers and give us a very important tool to work with decision-makers in the future.”

## CLC draws crowds

The Laurier MacDonald Community Learning Centre in Montreal’s East End has become a major hub of activity for English-speakers in the region. An ever-increasing number of the school’s parents are attending workshops on a wide range of topics concerning youth, which include literacy, nutrition, street gangs, depression and cyber-bullying. The community at large has also been attracted through a local publicity campaign. This CLC is one of 23 serving anglophone communities in the province.

## Researching community groups

The Centre for Community Organizations (COCO) has undertaken a broad research project aimed at better understanding the diversity of English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups across Quebec. The three-year project is funded by the province's *S cretariat   l'action communautaire autonome et innovation sociale*. Groups in Montreal, Laval and the Eastern Townships have been surveyed in phase one.

"It is an action research project," explains COCO facilitator **Frances Ravensbergen**, "in that there are expectations that the results will bring about change. Many of these groups don't know what's going on in the provincial government, and the government is not aware of them. What we've uncovered so far certainly opens several avenues to be considered."

One is in the area of funding. Of the 217 survey respondents, 45 percent receive no core provincial funding. One reason is that criteria are not available in English, and many have experienced challenges in communicating with the francophone bureaucracy. Then there is the government policy requiring groups to approach only one ministry for core funding. Many have multiple action areas: defining themselves within only one becomes problematic.

"It's incredible what these small groups are doing for their communities," Ravensbergen says. "We've given them a web presence in a map on our site. And we'll be making our phase one findings public later this spring." For information: [www.coco-net.org](http://www.coco-net.org).

## Poverty under study

The newly created Quebec English-speaking Communities Research Network (QUESCREN) has launched a move for increased research into the causes and levels of poverty among anglophones. The Concordia-based group will encourage investigation of the role language plays in their poverty status and what social action might alleviate their situation.

## Health literacy a vital need

A conference on health literacy taking place in April should shed more light on what has become a serious – and life-threatening – problem. Literacy Volunteers of Quebec has organized a half-day meeting at which specialists in the field will share their knowledge and experience with community organizations and healthcare providers.

**Linda Shohet**, executive director of the Centre for Literacy of Quebec, and long-time advocate of health literacy, is one of the key speakers. "We're trying to raise awareness of this issue," explains Shohet. "How many people know that over 60 percent of Canadians can't understand their prescriptions or deal with written health information they're receiving from the doctor, the hospital, the clinic. That's a huge number. But among seniors, that figure rises to over 80 percent. That tells us that something is terribly wrong with the way the healthcare system is communicating."

The concern also extends to social services organizations. But Literacy Alberta has just developed an audit tool kit that provides a way for them to assess their own communication practices relating to health literacy. "It's a brilliant tool," Shohet affirms. "It also provides clues about what is good practice, and so could well be applied within the health and social services sector." The kit is available from [www.literacyalberta.ca](http://www.literacyalberta.ca).

The health literacy conference is being held at the Montreal Children's Hospital on Tuesday, April 13. As well as onsite discussions, the sessions are to be video-conferenced to community learning centres in several regions. For information or to register: [www.lvq.qc.ca](http://www.lvq.qc.ca).

The Canadian Council for Learning has researched levels of health literacy across the country and has created an interactive map that illustrates its findings. Quebec results show a 50 percent literacy rate in the Montreal region, with numbers dropping off drastically farther out in the province. See: [www.ccl-ccc.ca](http://www.ccl-ccc.ca).

## Volunteerism in view

The Réseau de l'action bénévole du Québec (RABQ) is aiming to improve the climate for, and functioning of, volunteerism in the province. An association of 16 organizations representing community activity sectors in which volunteers play a significant role, RABQ was created as a follow up to the International Year of Volunteers 2001. It is currently funded by the provincial government.

“RABQ is at a turning point,” says **Nicole René**, newly appointed executive director. “We’re planning to broaden our membership base and strengthen our mandate. As a service to the volunteer sector and to our member organizations, we’ve launched a four-pronged program to develop tools and background support to help them function more effectively.”

The first focuses on youth: how to attract and maintain their interest. The second is to provide information on volunteerism itself in a way that will encourage greater participation from the public at large. The RABQ will analyze best practices for the professional management of volunteers and permanent staff. And it will promote the sector logo to raise recognition of volunteer action.

RABQ has been providing grants for projects by individual community groups through their umbrella organizations, and is hoping the government will renew funding for that program. For information: [www.rabq.ca](http://www.rabq.ca).

## New network in the west

Anglophones in the Soulanges-Vaudreuil region will be benefiting from a new community/public health network just launched by their local Health and Social Services Centre (CSSS). There are 17 such networks functioning across the province but this is the first to be spearheaded by a public institution. What spurred this initiative was the realization that there were significant gaps in delivery of services in English to a group that now accounts for over a quarter of the population.

## In brief

**Sophie Brochu**, president and CEO of Gaz Métro, and **Norman Hébert Jr.**, president and CEO of Groupe Park Avenue, have been named co-chairs of Centraide’s 2010 fund-raising campaign.

The Centre of Community Organizations (COCO) is celebrating its 10th anniversary.

The Centre for Literacy of Quebec is celebrating its 20th anniversary.

The Cummings Jewish Centre for Seniors is celebrating its 50 anniversary.

The East End English-speaking community network (REISA) has published a directory of health and social services available in English in the region. It is available from [claudiam@scciq.com](mailto:claudiam@scciq.com).

A new handbook, [A Practical Guide to Mental Health Rights](#), is available from AMI-Quebec at 514 486 1448.

A special telephone information session on the federal Registered Disability Savings Plan will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. on March 30. To register, contact [info@caringvoice.com](mailto:info@caringvoice.com).

The Information and Referral Centre of Greater Montreal has issued its 2010 edition of [Private Retirement Residences for Self Sufficient Seniors](#). For information: 514 527 1375.

The Information and Referral Centre of Greater Montreal operates a special [Referral helpline for seniors](#) at 514 527 0007.

Volunteer week is being held from April 18 to 24. This year’s theme is “Volunteers. From compassion to action”.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309

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